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Working Boys.—Frontispiece.

The Miser's Gold. p. 223.

THE

WORKING-BOY'S SUNDAY

IMPROVED.

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TO WORKING-BOYS OF ALL CLASSES.

Dear Friends:—This book has been written for those who are not great scholars,—so that I hope you will be able to make it all out by yourselves. Read it as you would do a letter sent on purpose for you. I want to see you happy, respected, doing well, for this world and the next. There is but one way in which this can be; and I know many lads have missed that way, partly from not knowing, partly from not thinking; and, with God's blessing, I want to help you to find it. You are no longer children: you have good sense enough to see in how many things you are doing badly and to wish to better yourselves. I see clearly how you may do so; and in this

book I have tried to make it plain to you. Read it through carefully, for your own sakes and for the sake of one who most heartily and earnestly desires your best good; and may God grant you his Holy Spirit in so doing!

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THE

Working-Boy's Sunday Improved.

CHAPTER I.

FAITH.

YOUR'S is a busy life. You work hard for your bread. You are up early in the morning, sometimes before it is light. All day long you must be busy in the fields; and when you come home at night you are so tired that you are fit for little else but to have your supper and go to bed. There is no help for this. You must have bread to eat; and you cannot buy bread without wages, and you cannot get wages unless you work for them. But, thank God, there are only six working-days in the week. God thought of the poor man when he made the Sabbath-day. He has given it to you to be a day of rest. It should be not only a day in which you rest your bodies, (which

will soon be in the grave,) but a day in which you get time to think about your souls, which will never die. Horses have rest on Sunday: they do no work, and may feed or sleep as they choose from morning to night; but you feel that your Sunday ought not to be like their's. Man and beast alike have but a short time to live. When the beasts die, it is not told us how it may be with them. But there can never be an end of man. His body for a time dies and turns to dust; but he himself—his soul—lives on. He goes out of this world to live forever in heaven or in hell. You all know this. I want you to *believe* it. What does BELIEVING mean? I will try to show you.

There was a little village down in the country, where the people were badly off. There were more hands than the farmers wanted; and many were out of work. But you know they must have something to eat, though they were at home all day; and some fathers who had families of little children, and some of the great boys who like plenty of food, were in sad trouble. Even when they had work, wages were so low that their money was hardly enough to pay their rent

and keep them in food and clothing. Things were in this way when a gentleman appeared with good news for the village of H——. He told the people that if they were willing to better themselves he would put them in the way of doing so. "There is a beautiful place," he said, "beyond the seas, where everybody is well off. There is plenty of work to be had, and good wages for the workmen. Food is good and cheap; and the country is so mild and fine that there is but little sickness. It is a long journey to get there; but I have a ship now starting, and I am willing to take any of you who like to go, and to give you a free passage. I will also promise to stock you for the voyage and to provide for you when you get there, until you are able to provide for yourselves." Here was a good offer. Some of the people seemed to think so. They crowded round the gentleman to say they had made up their minds to go, and to beg he would at once put them in the way of getting ready. How was it they were willing to start on a long sea-voyage and go so many miles away from all their friends? Because they *believed* they should better them-

selves. How do you know they believed? By their *going*,—by their *actions*.

What you really believe I shall see in your doings. You give proof of this every week. Why are you willing to go out early to the fields, and work all the day long for your employer,—from Monday to Saturday? Is it not because you *believe* he will give you your wages at the week's end? I see that you believe this by what you *do*. Now, you know from the Bible that the wicked shall be cast into everlasting fire, where the worm dieth not and the fire never is quenched. You know that the servants of God shall be taken to live with him in that beautiful country where there is no more trouble, no want, no cold, no hunger,—where God himself will wipe away tears from all eyes. You know it well, and are ready to say, "Oh, yes: I have heard all about heaven: I shall get there some day, I hope;" but you do not *believe* it. You cannot believe it, or you would not act as you do. If you wanted to get to New York, and were to set out and walk as straight as you could *away* from New York instead of *towards* it, would you get there at last? Would not

every step make you farther off? And how can you think you shall get to heaven at last, when you are walking in a road which leads just the other way? You know that it is so with you. You are not great scholars, but you know that swearers are not in the way to heaven, that drunkards are not, that Sabbath-breakers are not. You know that if you neglect your soul it must perish; but you work, and eat, and sleep, and on Sundays you pass away the time as you best can, as if you had no soul. Is this the way to heaven? Now, whether you like to say so or not, I am sure there is a secret feeling in your heart that I speak the truth; and I beg of you to think what you are about before it is too late,—to look which way you are going; for now is your time.

There were two girls in the city of Norwich. Susan was a good girl, and feared God. Maria was wild and foolish: she never thought about her soul. One Sunday these girls met in the street. Susan was going to church; Maria was going to a merry-making outside the city. Susan told her friend that she was on the road to ruin, and begged of her so hard to turn back and come with

her instead, that at last Maria was moved. "Well," she said, "I cannot come with you to-day, because I have promised to meet my friends; but this time next Sunday I'll be here again, just at this corner of the street, and go with you to church." The next Sunday, when Susan came to the corner of the street, she met a funeral: Maria's father and mother walked weeping behind it, for Maria's body was in the coffin. She had died the evening of the same day that Susan spoke to her last.* You know not what shall be on the morrow. I pray you, lose not a moment in seeking to save your souls. You have angered God all your life; but he is willing to pardon you for his dear Son's sake, only go and say to him, "Lord, save me: I perish."

If you do this, by God's help, it will be well with you forever; if you do not, you will be worse off than you were at first.

* A fact.

CHAPTER II.

THE TWO MASTERS.

THERE are really only two masters in this world,—the Lord God, and the devil. Everybody is serving God, or serving the devil. There are many who do not wish to serve God, who would be very sorry to think of serving the devil; but they can't help themselves. Every man, woman and child must have a master, and it must be one of these two. Some wish to serve both at once; but the Bible says this cannot be. Matt. vi. 24.

Now, I pray you, try to find out who is your master. You may tell by the work which you do. If you saw a boy at work at a forge, you would guess he was serving a blacksmith; if you saw him feeding the sheep, you would guess he was under a shepherd. If you could tell me what work you have been doing, I think I could tell you which master you have been serving.

Satan's work is sin, (John viii. 44,) and "the wages of sin is death." (Rom. vi. 23.) The work of God is, that we believe on him whom he hath sent, even his Son Jesus Christ, (John vi. 29;) and he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. John iii. 36.

There were bloody days in France rather more than fifty years ago. So many were killed that in some places the streets ran down with blood, as you may see our roads run down with water. In one village the soldiers made use of a shocking plan. They bade all the people come out of their houses and stand on the green, that they might look at them and decide who were to be shot and who were to be saved. A path ran across the green; and as the soldiers made up their minds what to do with one and another, they put those who were to be saved on the right side of the path, and those they meant to kill were sent to the left. When all were thus parted, the soldiers made those on the left side stand in rows, ten abreast, and, loading their own guns, they stood a little way off from their unhappy victims and fired at them until

all were killed. The shrieks of the wounded before they were quite dead, the streaming of blood, the agony of their poor friends who stood on the other side of the path but did not dare to stir for their help, were more horrible than I can tell you, or than you can well conceive.

Do you think the people of that village would care to know on which side they must stand? If a mother saw her dear son told to go to the left side of the path, would she not beg and pray the soldiers, with bitter tears, that he might be on the right side instead? Why? Why, that his life might be saved. A day is coming when we shall all be parted on two sides,—not by man, but by God. He will put on his left hand those who have served Satan, and his own dear servants and children on his right. Then will he say to those on the left, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;" but those on the right shall be welcomed into the glory of heaven with the precious words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, into the kingdom prepared for you." (Matt. xxv. 31–46.) If you care to know which side you shall be on

then, you must look to it which side you join *now;* for as a tree falls, so it must lie.

I know you do not wish to go to hell; but yet you don't like to enter God's service. One reason for this is that you do not see what a happy service it is.

It is a wonderful thing, but not the less true, that those who serve God are members of Christ. Jesus, the Son of God, the King of Glory, who lives in heaven, in the midst of the angels, calls us his members, if we are serving God. That means, he loves us as we love the members of our own bodies. Christ has bought us, not with silver and gold, but with blood. (1 Peter i. 18, 19.) He gave his own life in exchange for our's.

> "He knew how wicked men had been;
> He knew that God must punish sin:
> So, out of pity, Jesus said,
> I'll bear the punishment instead."

We deserved to die for our sins; but Jesus took death for us, that he might give us everlasting life.

You do much for your members: is there any thing which they do for you? They *serve* and *obey* you. Did not your hands lift your breakfast to your mouth this

morning? When you walk out, do not your feet carry you wherever you wish to go? Did your hand or foot ever refuse to do what you required of them? Thus it is with Christ's members: they will serve and obey him. It is a happy thing to obey Christ. He only forbids what would make us miserable. You would not allow your hand to go too near the fire. Why not? Because it would be burned. The Lord Jesus forbids us to touch sin, because we cannot do so without being hurt. Perhaps you may not have thought so in time past, but, if you look well into it, you will find that you never did wrong without being the worse for it. Some of you use bad words. Did swearing ever do you good? did it ever better you? did it ever make you happier? Some of you are often fighting. Did fighting ever give you comfort? Were you ever the better for it in body or mind? It is the same with all that is wrong. It never does us any good, but it always does us great and terrible mischief. Therefore the Lord forbids us to sin. Try to think over what I have said, and ask yourselves whether you wish to be members of Christ or not.

CHAPTER III.

A CHILD AND AN HEIR.

THESE two must go together. You know by your own families that a child will come in some day for what belongs to his father. Heaven will belong at the last to the children of God, because it belongs now to their Father. It is a glorious place. There is no sin and no sorrow there. No one who enters there can ever be in trouble again, for God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. The city is built of pure gold, like unto clear glass, and its gates are of shining pearl. There we can hunger no more, neither thirst any more; for Jesus, the Lamb of God, shall lead us to living fountains of water. It will belong to the children of God; nay, it *does* belong to them now, just as much as the great house and grounds in your place belong to the squire's son. They are in his father's hands now; but he counts it the same as if they were his own, for he

knows for certain they *are* to be his some day. Do you think sometimes it would be a fine thing to have the hopes of a rich man's son? Ah, boys, what is it compared with the hopes of a son of God? Let the squire enjoy his money and his horses and his grand ways of living to the full: in a few short years death will come, and he must leave all behind; "for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out." But the riches of a son of God will last for ever and ever. Death, which puts an end to the pleasures of others, will make the beginning of his; for "everlasting joy shall be upon his head, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

This is what God's children may look for. Are *you* one of God's children? I will help you to find out. Can't you sometimes, when you meet a child in the road, tell by its face to whom it belongs? Why? Because it's so like its father. Most children are like their parents in the face; and perhaps more still are like them in their ways and doings. It is the same with God's children: they are like their Father. One way of finding out if you are God's child is to ask

yourself, Am I like God? Do you say, I never saw God: how can I tell? We can tell by what we read of God in the Bible. You never saw Peter or Paul; but you can tell, by what we read of them in the Bible, what sort of men they were.

The Bible tells us, "God is love." "The Lord is loving to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." "He is kind to the unthankful and to the evil." Are you loving to all? If I was to ask your mother, should I hear that you are a loving son? Would your brothers and sisters say that you are kind to them? What do the men with whom you work in the yard or in the field think about you? Is it, "That boy is always ready to do one a kind turn: he does not mind troubling himself if he can help another;" or would it be, "He is an ill-natured fellow: trust him to look after himself, but he won't put himself out for anybody else." I believe boys are not often ill natured if others are kind to them; but we are not like God if we are only kind to those who are kind to us. How is it with you when others vex and spite you? Do you strive with a soft answer to turn

away their wrath, or do you quickly give them sharp words and blows back again? Two children were sitting together in a class, when something angered the boy, and he gave his sister a slap in the face. Quick as thought the little girl raised her hand to give him another; but her teacher said, "My dear, can't you show him instead how to return good for evil?" The child battled for a moment with her angry feelings, and then, throwing her arms round her brother's neck, gave him a kiss for his blow. This was one way of being like God.

Another thing we find out in the Bible about God is that he is *holy*. God hates sin. He calls it "the *abominable thing* which he hates." He says, "He cannot away with it." God's children hate sin. They fear to do wrong. They are grieved when their evil hearts have led them astray, and will strive more against it another time. Boys, what do *you* feel about sin? There is a great deal of wickedness going on about you: you may be in the midst of swearers and drunkards, and fighting and disputing. What do you think of it? You know it is wrong: do you fear it? Do you hate it? Do

you boldly refuse to join in it yourselves, and tell others that they should not go on so? Or are you much the same as those about you? If you will honestly ask yourselves these questions, you will begin to find out whether you are God's children or not. And let me beg you to lose no time about it. If you are not a child of God, you are not an heir of the kingdom of heaven; if you are not an heir of the kingdom of heaven, you are an heir of the kingdom of the wicked one. This is what we have all deserved; but, for the sake of his dear Son, God is willing to be a reconciled Father to every one of us. He says, "Come out and be separate, put away the unclean thing, and I will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." And he adds, in another place, "If children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ."

The Bible says, "When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. Again, when the wicked turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and

right, he shall save his soul alive." Read through the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel, and see if there can be any doubt about this. If, then, you really wish now to become God's child, what must you do? What would you do if you had angered your own father? Would you not go and tell him you are sorry for it and you don't mean to do so again? Follow the same plan with your Father which is in heaven. Only acknowledge that you have sinned against him, and cast away from you all your transgressions, and he will receive you; for Jesus' sake, those that come unto him "he will in no wise cast out." We have deserved to be punished; but Jesus has taken the punishment instead of us, and, if we turn to him, God will not punish us. "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves. and live ye."

CHAPTER IV.

WORK AND WAGES.

THERE is an old saying, "A burnt child dreads the fire." When we find that any thing hurts us or brings us pain and trouble, we grow shy of meddling with it; we fear it, and put it away. For this reason I want to show you the real truth about the works of the devil. Some of you have been suffering from them all your life without knowing it. You do not know it, because the devil himself has blinded your eyes; and I pray God that his Spirit may now give you to see things as they really are.

The works of the devil,—what are they? His works are the things which he does. Your works are the things that you do,—hoeing and weeding and ploughing. A shoemaker's works are the making and mending of shoes. Any man's works are the things which he does. The devil's works are the things which he does. Mur-

ders,—the murders of souls, telling lies, fighting against God, leading others to do wrong, as when he entered into Judas Iscariot and stirred him up to betray the Lord Jesus,—these are some of his works. They may all be called by one short name of three letters,—*sin*. The great business of his life is to make us sin. Why does he want us to sin? For the same reason that he wants our souls to be lost: because he hates us: he wants to make us miserable, and he knows sin will make us miserable: sin and sorrow are tied together, and neither man nor angel can part them asunder. As surely as you will be burned if you touch the fire will you have sorrow if you do what is wrong. You have all proved this. Did you ever quarrel and fight without finding yourself the worse for it? Did you ever take even an apple that did not belong to you without wishing it back again on the tree? Did you ever take too much food or drink without finding out next day that it would have been far better to let it alone? Nay, I believe if you were to reckon up all the headaches and all the heartaches which you can remember, and find out what they

came from, nineteen out of twenty of them came from doing wrong. The devil knows this; and when he has persuaded you to sin he is satisfied.

Perhaps you have had a hard day's work in the wet and the cold, and you come home at night tired and hungry. Your mother has made up a blazing fire and gives you a seat in the chimney-corner; your supper is smoking hot upon the table, and the little ones cluster around to make up a cheerful family party. You have every thing that you could wish for; but you are not happy. Why? Some dispute has arisen between you and your brother: you are angry with him; you almost hate him; and sin has spoiled all your comfort. Sorrow *must* follow sin, as surely as the sunrise will follow the dawn. And not only in this world: after work must come wages; and the Bible tells us, "The wages of sin is death," that is, eternal death. (See Rom. vi. 23 and Rev. xx. 13–15.) How can this be, when every day we see that sinners live to be old? Because wages come *after* work, not in the middle of it. The devil may not give you your wages this year, or next year, or the

year after that, but they must surely come at the last, if you are working for him, whether you like them or not. We shall be "judged every man according to his works; and those that have done evil shall be" cast into the lake of fire. You are no longer children. I appeal to your common sense upon this matter. Do you not see that the works of the devil are the very curse and plague-spot of your lives, from which you must ask God to deliver you or you can never be happy?

Sinful pleasures may be as sweet as sugar at first, but there's poison underneath. Satan knows that if he can take up your mind with good eating and drinking, smart dress, or empty pleasures, you won't think of any thing better. The Bible says, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (See 1 John ii. 15.) The rich are often taken up with pomps and vanities, to the ruin of their own peace; for all the riches in the world can't make us happy. Sometimes you fancy that to have plenty of money to buy all you wish for would make you happy; but it's a great mistake. We read in history of a man

named Gardiner, who was one of the first of the land in his time. He lived in a beautiful house; he had numbers of servants to wait on him, and plenty of horses and carriages in his stables; his purse was full of money and his table covered with dainty food. Was he happy? One day he saw a dog come into his room; and he cried out, in the bitter wretchedness of his heart, "Oh that I could change places with that dog!" He would rather have been turned into a beast than remain what he was. It is one of the devil's lies if he tells you that the world can make you happy.

But perhaps you say, There is no fear of my being ruined with these things: I have no chance of getting at them. It is true, you are saved from many temptations by having no money to spare; but Satan has temptations for the poor man as well as for the rich. Be not ignorant of his devices. When you get a holiday to go and see the shows and join in the merry-making, you meet bad company; you get too much drink, and learn bad words: the devil has enticed you into evil. It is the same with the public house close by: perhaps you hear music

there; or you hear them all laughing and talking, and you go in to join them: you are tempted to spend your money, and to sit up drinking half the night, keeping company with the worst men in the place.

Do not mistake, and think God wants to shut you out from all pleasures. God, our Father, loves to see us happy. So much did he long to see and to make us happy, he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to die for us. Because he loves you, he forbids all that would only do you harm. A farmer once had arsenic mixed up with sweet cake to poison the rats in his barns. His little girl found a piece of the cake as she was playing about, and, right pleased, as a child would be, she put it to her mouth. The father saw her just in time and snatched it from her hand. The child set up a bitter cry, and thought it very hard that he would not let her have the cake that looked so nice. Was it hard? Did he forbid it from love, or from hatred? And it is nothing but tender love which makes God forbid to us the pomps and vanities which would ruin our souls.

But are all pleasures wrong? Life will

be dull enough if we are never to have any fun. This is not what the Bible teaches: many times over it bids us rejoice. God says, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine;" but "there is a laughter in which the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness." We are only forbidden the pleasures which would lead us into sin, pleasures which may be nice for a moment but leave bitterness instead of joy behind them. No sort of fun or amusement is forbidden to you *if it does not make you or others do what is wrong.* Find out for yourselves what things have drawn you into sin: these give up. And, if it costs you something to go without them, you will find God knows how to make it up to you. You will have a peace and comfort within, which will be worth, a hundred times over, what you have lost. To keep a clear conscience is the best way for making a light heart. And when this short life is over, when sinners who have cared only to find their own pleasure have gone down into everlasting misery, you shall enter into his presence, where there is fulness of joy, and be placed at his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore.

CHAPTER V.

PUZZLE EXPLAINED.

My dear friends, there are some strange things going on in your village: I wish you would explain them for me. I believe, if you were to ask, you would find twenty men, and as many boys, who really wish to be well off; and yet they are doing the very worst for themselves that they possibly can. They wish to be happy; and yet they are doing every day things which they know, as well as you or I do, must bring them sorrow. Perhaps they have been in trouble twenty times from drunkenness, idleness or stealing; and yet they go back to these things over and over again, as if they did them good and not harm. What is the reason of it? They are not wanting in good sense about other things; but in these matters we must call them nothing better than fools for their pains. And what shall we say to those who might live in heaven for-

ever, but they won't take God's way of getting there,—who might have the best Friend in all the world to be their friend, and yet they choose to have nothing to do with him. Am I not right when I say that there are strange things going on about you?

It is the *evil desires of our own hearts* which drag us into trouble. The devil might tempt us as much as he pleased, he might entice us with his sweetest poison, he could not gain our souls *if we were not willing to listen to him.* Some of you set traps: you know very well that you might make the best trap in the world and bait it with the nicest morsel, but it would be of no use *if the bird or beast had not a mind to come near it.* The great secret of all the mischief which Satan does us lies in our own hearts. We love his wicked ways: they suit our wicked tastes and desires. The Bible told us long ago that in us there was no good thing; and, as we only *like* what is *like* us, it is plain that of ourselves we cannot like what is good. If you will read the fourth chapter of Matthew, you will find that Satan tempted the Lord Jesus with his greatest temptations

in vain. And why? Because the Lord Jesus is altogether good: he cannot like what is wrong. Do you say, Well, I am not like him: so I can't help doing wrong: it is of no use for me to think of giving up the sinful lusts of the flesh? Take care how you say so: it is a great mistake, as I will prove to you.

Most of you work in your fathers' gardens. If you left a bit of ground quite empty for six months, if you put nothing in it and did nothing to it, what would grow there? Weeds,—nothing but weeds and rubbish. You are sure of that: not a boy who reads this will doubt it. No gooseberry-bushes, or currant-trees, or potatoes ever sprang out of the ground in our country, without being planted first. Well, then, what is the use of gardening? If nothing but rubbish comes out of the ground, why should we ever trouble ourselves about it? Ah, boys, you know better: you know that though nothing good *naturally* comes out of the ground if it is left to itself, yet that, if you are willing to pull up the weeds and to plant good trees, things will be very different. Instead of a tangled, thorny,

miserable bit of waste land that does nobody any good, you may have a beautiful garden, to give you potatoes and onions in the winter and gooseberries and currants in the summer, with maybe a sweet rose or a wallflower. Whose fault will it be if the garden goes to ruin? And now, can you tell me whose fault it will be if your own hearts go to ruin? I know they are bad; I know they bring forth nothing but what is evil: the Bible tells us that; but it will be your own doing if they remain so. If you want to be saved from misery here and misery when you die, if you wish to give up the sinful lusts of the flesh and all the troubles they bring, you can; for God has made a way for you.

What is the way? Our gardens shall make it plain to us again. Suppose you had a crab-apple tree: what sort of fruit would it bring forth? Unpleasant and sour fruit, that nobody can eat. If you want the tree to do you any good, you must *graft* it. You know how that is done: I dare say some of you can do it yourselves. We cut off part of a branch from the old stock and graft into it a little branch from some good

apple-tree instead. If all does well, this will grow and blossom and bear good fruit. And is this enough? No: we must watch the tree, to break off every twig of the old stock that shoots out afresh: else the new graft will not thrive. This gives you some notion of the plan we must take with our own hearts. We must get a new graft put in, and then break off all that comes from the old stock.

But you and I cannot make for ourselves new hearts, any more than a tree could put in for itself a new graft. The tree depends

upon the gardener, and we depend upon God the Holy Spirit. We can't help ourselves in this matter: all we can do is to cry to him for help; but this we know, none ever cried to him in vain. He says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find." (See Matt. vii. 7.) He says, "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." (See Ezek. xxxvi. 26.) And again: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." (See 2 Cor. xii. 9.)

Will you refuse to listen to God's offer of help? He is able to take away your hard and evil heart; he is able to make you love to do right and fear to do wrong; and he will, if you ask him for his dear Son's sake. But remember, it is not enough to have the new graft put in: you must keep your eye on the old stock. It is not dead, and it will always be trying to put out new shoots. Break them off day by day as fast as you see them. They will yield you nothing but bitter fruit if you leave them alone. You cannot allow one thing that is wrong in yourself without its doing you hurt. Do not go out to your

work one day without asking God first, on your knees at your bedside, "O Lord, give me a new heart, for Jesus Christ's sake." Some people get nice New Year's or Christmas gifts: no gift you could have will bring you the joy this will; and it is to be had for the asking. The Bible tells us of those who have it, that they are like trees planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth fruit in their season: their leaf shall not wither, and whatsoever they do shall prosper. See Ps. i. 3.

CHAPTER VI.

DANGER AND DELIVERANCE.

Did you ever see a house on fire? You will not soon forget it, if you have; for it is a terrible sight. I read an account of one the other day, from which all the family had escaped but one poor boy. The flames broke out below; his mother and father and the younger ones rushed out into the street just as they were, to save their lives, and did not see at first that he was not among them. He was sleeping in an upper room, and was not awakened by the noise until it was too late to escape by the stairs: they were all in flames! The poor fellow rushed to the window, thinking at first that he would jump out; but he saw at a glance that it was too high; he would have broken his neck if he had tried; and, with a piercing shriek, he called for a ladder. It was some minutes before it could be had, and meanwhile the fire had reached the lad's bed-

room from below. He felt its scorching heat, as he stood at the window, straining his eyes down the street to look out for the ladder, his last hope of rescue. The fire spread with frightful rapidity in his little room: another moment, and his night-shirt must have been in flames,—when there was a shout from those below, "The ladder! The ladder at last!" You can fancy with what eager haste he forced his way through the narrow casement and flung himself upon the welcome steps, while his poor parents' agony was changed into unspeakable thankfulness as they heard, "He is on the ladder! He is saved!"

Now, let me ask you two questions. Could that boy have been saved without the ladder? I am sure you will agree with me in saying, No: certainly not. But could the ladder have saved him *if he had not got upon it?* Of course it could not. It might as well have been a hundred miles off, for any good it could do him, if he had not cared to make use of it. I pray you to bear these two things in mind; for we too are in danger of fire,—a fire which never shall be quenched. The flames are coming

nearer, nearer, every hour we live: we must perish if we stay where we are: nay, it is not safe to tarry for a moment as we are: five minutes more, and it may be too late. I knew a man in the town next to our own, who went out to his work one Tuesday morning with no more thoughts of death than you or I may have at this moment. The fear of God was not in his heart, and he stood upon the brink of everlasting fire,—though he seemed as if he knew it not.

In the course of the afternoon, something having vexed him, he broke out into bitter oaths and curses while busy with his work, unloading corn. The words had not left his lips three minutes before his foot slipped: he fell from the stack, and broke his neck in the fall. Those about him raised him in their arms, and he strove to speak; but the power was gone. In ten minutes he was a corpse; and where, think you, was his soul? Some forty or fifty years that man had enjoyed health and strength. Times without number he might have escaped, but he did not: he did not

think the flames were so near as they proved to be at last.

Oh, boys, some of you are swearers, drunkards, Sabbath-breakers, as he was. Do you know how near you are standing to hell-fire? As your friend, I beseech of you, be warned in time, flee from the wrath to come, lay hold of eternal life. No matter what your past life has been, there is a way of escape, and *for you.* The ladder is planted against the wall: throw yourself upon it and you shall live. The Lord Jesus Christ died for you,—for all us sinners who, without him, must be lost. He says, Come to me, lay hold of me, and you shall be saved.

But don't forget that it is one thing to have a way of escape made ready for us, and quite another to make use of it. The ladder would have done that poor fellow no good if he had not got upon it; and the death which the Lord Jesus died for us upon the cross will do you no good unless you come to him. This is what the Bible calls *faith.* Will you find out for yourselves in the Bible,—Acts xvi. 31? Is it not as plain as words can make it?—"*Believe* on

the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou *shalt be saved.*" Then look at Mark xvi. 16:—"He that believeth not shall be damned." But what is faith?—What is it to believe? Faith is just the same feeling about the Lord Jesus which that boy had about the ladder. He saw he was in danger; he wanted to be saved. He saw by the ladder he could be saved: therefore he laid hold of it. If we have faith, we shall see that we are in danger,—we shall want to be saved, —we shall know that Christ can save us; and therefore we shall in our hearts lay hold of him.

This is the Christian faith,—that is, a faith which makes a man a Christian. The different articles—that is, items or parts of it—we shall have to speak of more another time. So far I have tried to make it plain to you; yet I know well you cannot understand a word about it unless the Spirit of God teaches you. We are born blind; we have no faith to see these things of ourselves; and what is the use of a candle, or the sun itself, to a blind man? But oh that you would pray, "Lord, open my eyes; Lord, show me where I stand; Lord, give

me to know if I am in danger!" I will tell you a story about two short prayers, which I should be very glad if you would begin to use.

There was a good minister in Scotland, who used sometimes to travel about from place to place upon his little gray pony; and he made this rule for himself,—that, wherever he stayed for the night, he would, if possible, get the people of the house together for family prayers. One night he arrived rather late at a little country-inn, and one of his first questions was to ask the landlord if he would allow him to assemble his family and lodgers for prayers before they went to bed. The landlord made no objection, and the minister found quite a roomful when he went in to them. He expressed his pleasure in seeing them, and asked if all were there. "All, sir," said the landlord, "except the little kitchen-maid; and she is too dirty and too ignorant to make one of us." "Ah, my friend," said the clergyman, earnestly, "that poor girl has a soul to be saved, just as much as you or I have. Let me beg for her that she should come in to-night." But the master

did not seem to wish it, and the gentleman said no more till prayers were over, when he laid his hand upon the landlord's shoulder. "I should like to say a word to that little girl, if you would kindly allow me to see her." The landlord looked surprised, as if he thought he had rather a strange visitor in the house: however, he did not like to make any further objection, and he led the way to the back-place, where the little maid was very busy washing up her dishes.

The clergyman began to talk to her, and found that she was indeed as ignorant as she was dirty. She did not seem to know or to care any thing about her soul. At last he said, "I am going to teach you a little prayer, and if you will promise to learn it, and to use it every morning and every night until I come again, I will bring you a fine new handkerchief." The girl's eyes brightened at this, and she promised. Then the minister said, seriously, "You will never care to be saved until you know what danger you are in; and you will never know you are in danger until you see how full of sin your heart is. I want you to ask God every day, '*Lord, show me myself.*' It is a

short prayer." The girl repeated it after him, "Lord, show me myself," and very soon learned it, and promised to use it every day. Then the minister went away and left her.

The next time that he came to the inn on his little gray pony—it was some months after—he asked the landlord, when he had inquired after the rest of his family, "And, pray, how is the little kitchen-maid to whom I paid a visit when I was here last?" "Why, sir," was the answer, "to tell you the truth, she has been in a very poor way since you were here last. She has fretted herself quite ill. We don't know what to do with the girl at all." The minister asked to see her, and found the poor little maid on a bed of straw in a little nook under the stairs. She was indeed pale and thin: he would scarcely have known her again. When he asked what was the matter, she broke out afresh into tears:—"Oh, sir, I have scarcely known an easy moment since you were here last. I did pray God to show me myself; but I am ready to wish I never had. He has shown me the wickedness of my own heart until I am a misery to myself.

I think I am the worst sinner that ever lived; and, oh! where must I be going to when I die? To the bad place, I know,—I feel!" The minister tried to comfort her. He told her she had deserved to die, but that Jesus, the Son of God, had died *instead* of her, and that if she looked to Jesus she should be saved. The poor girl did not seem able to believe it. "I don't think he can love me," she said. The good minister was not able to remain very long, but he said he would teach her another little prayer, which she must use also every day. It was this:—"*Lord, show me thyself.*"

Many years passed on, and the good minister had never been able to go again to the inn of —— on his little gray pony. He had become too old for journeys, and remained chiefly at his own home. One day his servant knocked at his door and told him a stranger wanted to see him. "Let her come in," he said; and a respectable young woman came in and dropped a curtsy. "You do not know me, sir." "No, my friend, I do not. Have I ever seen you before?" She replied by asking, "Do you remember, sir, being so kind as to teach

two little prayers to the kitchen-maid in the country inn of——?" The minister passed his hand over his forehead. "I remember,—oh, yes, I remember all about it now. I was very much interested in that child. Can you tell me any thing about her?" "Sir," said the young woman, modestly, with tears in her eyes, "I am that little maid: I was in great trouble about my sins when you saw me last, and you taught me to pray, 'Lord, show me thyself.' I did, and the Lord heard me. Oh, sir, he showed me what a friend I have in Jesus, and how much he *must* have loved me to die upon the cross for me; and now I feel that I can never praise him and thank him and serve him enough. The Lord has blessed me, too, in my place and my work,—so that I seem to have all I want; and I determined, if possible, to find you out and thank you, for I feel I owe every thing to you."

Will any boy who reads this begin to pray, "Lord, show me myself! Lord, show me thyself"?

CHAPTER VII.

WILL AND WON'T.

THERE is a great difference between boys. Everybody knows that. Some are older and some younger; some have more wages and some less; some spend all their money for eating and drinking, so that their clothes are seldom fit to be seen, while others manage to put by a little every week, with which they get a good hat and a tidy coat to wear on Sundays. No doubt there are many things in which you are all different one from another; but there is one thing, unless I am very much mistaken, in which you are all alike: *you have each and all a will of your own.* You may be strangers to me, and I to you, but one thing I know about every boy who reads these lines: it does not matter who he is, or where he lives, his own heart bears witness that I speak the truth when I say that he has a will of his own. Maybe you know what it is to have plenty of it, too.

It is not only your own will, but a strong will, that cannot bear to be mastered, and sometimes will not be hindered by any difficulties from getting its own way.

But it does not follow that you need be ashamed of it because you have found out that you have a strong will of your own. A strong will is a noble thing, if only it is of the right sort. Of all the great men who have done great things, ninety-nine out of a hundred of them have had a strong will of their own. They made up their minds that this, that, or the other was to be done, and that they would do it. They expected difficulties, and were not cast down by them: cost what it might, they had set their hearts upon the thing and were determined to bring it about. The consequence was, they *did* bring it about. A strong will carried all before it. I could amuse you for hours with stories of men who have resolved to do things which seemed almost impossible, and have succeeded, sometimes after years of delay and disappointment, just because nothing could hinder the strength of their will to conquer at last, but I shall only give you one here.

A boy named Warren Hastings stood looking one day over a beautiful view of woods and gardens and corn-fields, with one stately mansion half hidden amidst the trees. Warren was poor, and so were his family now; but he knew that once they had owned the broad lands at his feet and lived in the very house upon which he was gazing. But for their troubles or their folly, (I know not which,) the grounds would have been his some day. The boy's heart swelled within him at the thought, and, before he left the spot upon which he stood, he had made up his mind that, by hook or by crook, by fair means or foul,—somehow or other,—the lands should be his again before he died. How he brought it about is not to our purpose; but that he fulfilled his resolution, and died in the family mansion, master of the broad lands around it, is a well-known fact. You have heard the old saying, "What a man wills he can do."

In one sense, it is the same with you as with your horses. Which horse is worth the most,—a stupid, lazy animal, that has no will at all to his work, or a fine, high-spirited creature, who only wants holding in, for

fear he should pull beyond his strength? I know which of the two most boys would rather have to do with. Only notice one thing: a horse must be *broken in*, or the strength of his will does mischief not good. Nothing gives so much trouble as an animal that is fully determined to get the bit in his teeth and go his own way, not your's: he is really worth nothing at all. Why? Because his own will is a foolish will; he has not sense to do what is best for himself or for others; but let him learn to submit to his master, and all will be easy for him and for you,—for him, because he will trot along cheerfully where he is told, and spare himself both the hard words and hard blows he had before; for you, because, instead of dragging and driving and beating, you only have to guide him, just to show him what you mean him to do. Now, boys, we are like our horses in this. Our will is a foolish will. So long as we follow our own will, we shall neither be happy ourselves, nor do others any good. Like a young colt's, our will must be broken in: it must be changed before we can do well; and, once changed, the stronger it is the better.

But you and I feel great love for our own will: it would be hard work to give it up. How are we to get it changed,—broken in?

We do not like to obey God. We fume and chafe against his laws; we follow our own will, not his. But let us once feel *how* he has loved us; let us once know that he gave his only Son to die *for us*,—that the Lord Jesus suffered the most terrible of all sufferings *for us*,—and the case is changed. We understand it is for our own good to do what he tells us; we trust him that, if sometimes it seems hard to do right, he would not have commanded it unless he had known we should be the happier for it. We look up to him, that we may be guided by his eye; we learn to reply from the heart to his own loving invitation, "Wilt thou not from this time say unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" And while love bends, it does not break the will. Many a brave fellow has been crushed by the sternness of a cruel master until his spirit has been broken and he has had no more strength in him. It is not so with God. He invites all to come and walk in his joyful ways, but he compels none. It

was said of those who refused, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." They had not life, therefore they perished; they *would* not come to have it, therefore it was their own doing that they perished. God says to you by me to-day, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Could any thing be plainer? He puts it to your own choice.

But is there any one who says, "I am willing. I want to be saved; but when I begin to try it seems as if I could not do the thing I would. I could fancy that I had *two* wills, one for right, and one for wrong"? I am not surprised at that. Paul felt just the same hundreds of years ago: he said, "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not." There is one promise which just meets the difficulty. The Bible says, "Thy people *shall be made willing* in the day of thy power;" and again, "It is God who worketh in you *both to will and to do* of his good pleasure." You cannot bend your own will, but God is both able and willing to do it for you. How can we doubt this when he has told us, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification"?

CHAPTER VIII.

AN AGREEMENT.

PERHAPS you do not often think about the great God; and yet in your secret heart you will agree with me when I say that you are *looking for something from God.* Whether they care to own it or not, I believe there are few persons of whom it is not true that they are expecting to receive something at God's hands. You may be among the merriest and the most careless, and yet there are times when you can't help thinking what you have to look for when your soul goes out of the world and your body is laid in its last resting-place.

A steady boy thinks, "Oh, I'm better than my comrades. God won't send a respectable young fellow like me to hell." A wild lad cannot so deceive himself: he knows that if he reaps what he has been sowing, it will be a bad harvest: so he tries never to think of it at all. Now, either of these plans

may answer for keeping your mind easy about this matter,—at least, for a while; but *will they save your soul when you go out of this world into the next?* No, neither of them: do not dare to hope so; for it is a hope which will ruin you. The goodness of the best-behaved boy in the world is not good enough for heaven; and as for those who do not pretend to be good, but just shut their eyes and never trouble themselves about it, let me ask you a question: Because a murderer never thinks about the gallows, where he is presently to die, will that save him from being hung? No, no: your own good sense tells you this; and you know, too, that all sensible men like to look beforehand and to be prepared for what is coming. You are growing beyond a child; and, as one coming to riper years, I ask you, each boy that reads this, seriously to inform yourself upon this point:—What may I expect to receive at God's hands? Many people could not answer this question for you, though they are wise enough about other things. I will tell you what God himself has told us about it, that, when you see how we are placed in

these respects, you may make up your own mind and act accordingly.

More than three thousand years ago, God entered into a covenant with man. What is a covenant? It is the same as an agreement, when two people agree together about any thing which they are to do. We might call it a covenant between you and your employer. You agree to do his work, and he agrees to pay you money for it. In this ancient covenant, God promised things far better than any one man can agree to do for another; but they were to be given *on conditions.* Your master pays you wages on condition that you do his work. God promised to reward his people on condition that they served him. (See Deut. xxx. 15, 16.) "I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments, *that thou mayest live*, and the Lord thy God shall bless thee." How were they to be blessed? Almost with every good thing you can think of. With good crops in their fields and gardens, so that bread would be good and plentiful; with God's blessing upon their children, God's blessing upon their cattle, upon their

basket and their store. (See Deut. xxviii.) He promised to shield them from sickness and poverty and trouble,—to watch continually how he might do them good,—if they served and obeyed him.

On the other hand, they were warned that if they broke their side of this agreement they would be worse off than they were before it was made. The curses of an angry God would rest upon them wherever they went and in all they did:—"The Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed." (Deut. xxviii. 20.) When God had made it clear to them what this covenant was, he put the choice before them, whether or not they wished to enter into it:—"I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." (Deut. xxx. 19.) The people answered, "The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey." Josh. xxiv. 24.

So far they did well; but you know it is not enough to make a good and a wise agreement: the next thing is to *keep it.*

Here they failed entirely, not once, but a hundred times. Read for yourselves in the book of Judges how often, how madly, they broke their side of the covenant. "They forsook the Lord God of their fathers," though they had never received any thing but good at his hands, though they had always done well while they were serving him: they turned every one after his own ways, serving idols and breaking his laws. The Lord's patience with them was wonderful. Over and over again he forgave them the past, and put them, as it were, upon another trial; he helped them out of the trouble they had brought upon themselves, and started them fairly again. It all seemed of no use. There was no good thing in them: therefore no good thing could come out of them. Which of you could make an empty sack stand upright? Their hearts were empty of all good: could they stand up without falling into sin? God knew this; but he wanted them to learn it. And you and I must learn it too. It is the first step in the way to heaven to learn that we cannot do right by ourselves,—that in us there dwells no good thing; therefore that

for our own doings we can look for nothing but punishment from God.

The first covenant failed in doing what was wanted. It became clear that, while what we *received* depended on what we *deserved* at God's hands, we should get nothing but trouble, because wicked hearts and wicked lives could deserve nothing but punishment. What was to be done? Would God leave man alone, to sin and to suffer? The Bible tells us he was long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish. Because it was proved that we could not help ourselves, the Lord Jesus Christ stepped in to help us. God made a new, a second agreement with man, (see Heb. viii. 7–10;) and in this second covenant there was a Mediator, who undertook to fulfil the conditions for us. What is a mediator? One who mediates, or stands between two others. The Lord Jesus Christ came between God and man. Man was to be punished for his sins; Jesus came and took the punishment instead of us: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; with his stripes we are healed;" he took us out of a state

of ruin, and put us into a state of salvation or safety. I will explain it to you further by a story.

Times were hard in the town of M——, and many of the people had carelessly got behindhand with their rent. At last it became such a serious thing to the landlord that he was obliged to send some of them to prison until the money was paid. The men saw that to remain in prison would be ruin to their families and themselves. They begged and prayed to be let off, but the landlord replied, "Pay your debts, and I will let you out: you allow the money is fairly owed: I ask nothing but a fair payment, and that day and hour you shall be free." But the men had no means of paying, and they were obliged to abide by the consequences.

Days and weeks passed on, and there seemed no hope for the prisoners, until the landlord one day took a friend with him to see them. He inquired into the case: he saw they deserved their troubles, but his heart was touched with the greatness of their misery, and he longed to help them. He asked about the amount of the debt. It was so great that it would take all his ready

money, and for a time make him a poor man too, if he paid it; but he thought more of the prisoners than of himself. Next day he returned with the sum of money required, and, gathering the prisoners together, he paid down upon the spot the sum owed by every one of them. Then, turning to the jailer, he bade him open the doors and let them go forth, "for," said he, "in the sight of God and man they are free." With fetters broken, with open doors, they stood listening to the story of his love: nothing remained but that they should enter into liberty and joy and peace. It was a state of safety,—of deliverance; not that they had *earned* it; they did not pay one farthing towards it; but it was freely given, out of the greatness of that man's pitying love.

Will this make plain to you the difference between the first and second covenants? We are in debt to God; he has a long list set down against each of us, and, like other debtors, while it is unpaid we must suffer for it. In the first covenant the agreement was, Do what is right, and you shall be delivered from trouble; as the landlord said, Pay your debts, and I will let you out.

But man was ruined: he could no more do what was right than a beggar could pay down a sum of money out of an empty pocket. Therefore the first covenant could no more save him than the chance of getting out if they paid their debts could help the prisoners. In the second covenant, the Son of God paid for us what we owed, and threw open their prison-doors to perishing, guilty sinners. And what remains for us to do? Nothing but to go forth into the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free,—nothing but to stretch out the hand and take what he freely offers. Pardon, free pardon for all the past, God's help and blessing for all the future, that bright home beyond the sky to be our own forever,—these, and far more than these, are freely offered to us through Jesus. This is the blessed state in which we find ourselves,—a state of deliverance, or a state of salvation. We do not, we never could, deserve it; the wages of our sin is death, but the *gift* of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Oh that I could plead with you, by all the glory of heaven, which you are

despising,—by all the misery of everlasting condemnation, to which you are hastening, —to take and live! Do not let the best behaved look to be saved for their own goodness: it is all bad coin: it will not pass in heaven: but you don't need it. If you are only willing to accept what Jesus offers,—to give your heart to him, to rest your hopes on him,—he will make the reckoning good for you: for his sake, you may confidently look for eternal life. And you that are wild and wicked, do not think, because you feel you are deep in God's debt, that your's is a bad case and it is no use for you to try to be Christians. The Lord Jesus Christ has paid the heaviest debt with which poor sinners ever burdened themselves. He is able to save to the uttermost. Only open your eyes and see that he has opened the prison-doors for you, and there will be a deep and fervent meaning in your words when you say, "I heartily thank our heavenly Father that he hath called me to this *state of salvation* through Jesus Christ our Saviour. And I pray unto God to give me his grace, that I may continue in the same unto my life's end."

CHAPTER IX.

YOU BELIEVE, WHAT?

Most of you left school as soon as you were old enough to frighten away the crows from the corn, or to lead the horse with which your father was ploughing, that you might earn something towards your own living; and, unless you have had a chance of attending an evening school in the winter, you have been able to get very little learning since. I do not expect that many of you are great scholars; and yet you know that to say many words is only making so much noise, unless we think about and feel the meaning of them in our hearts. What do I mean by the word "creed"? Perhaps you don't know. Yet it matters more to you than your work, or your health, or any one thing that I know you care about. Why? Because our creed is what we *credit*, or believe, and on our belief depends all our comfort and well-doing.

I feel, while I say it, how strange this sounds to you. You have never thought so. To have plenty to eat and drink, to get wages enough to buy your clothes with, to have a kind master and a holiday now and then,—on these things, you think, it depends whether you are happy or not. Believe me, this is a great mistake. Our comfort and well-doing depend on what we believe, not on what we have. On *what* we believe, I say; because we all believe something, and as we believe we act. Observe, it is not the *truth* of a thing which determines our actions, but how far we believe it. For instance, the house over your head might be as firm as a rock, but if somebody deluded you into the belief that it was just going to tumble down, you would run out of it in a hurry, and get other people out as fast as possible. It is a foolish thing to run out of a safe house; you would have all your trouble for nothing; and yet I am sure you *would* do it if you thought it was going to fall, because as we believe we act. The more reason, you will say, that we should only believe the truth, that we may not be so silly as to run away when there is no

danger, or, what would be worse still, that we may not believe all is safe, and remain where we are, when in another minute we may have the building about our ears. I think so too: therefore I said that all our welfare depends upon our creed,—on our real, true belief, mind; not on the things which we say we believe, without any meaning in our words, but on those things *which our actions prove that we believe.*

Voltaire was a downright unbeliever,—one of the men whom you may have heard called infidels. He spent his life in declaring that there was no God, and teaching others to think so too. What harvest did he reap from the seed he had sown? His infidel creed made him a miserable man. His death-bed was so dreadful that the nurse who attended him refused, many years after, to wait upon another sick gentleman, until she was assured that he was not an infidel. The anguish of Voltaire's mind seemed to make him quite frantic: he could be heard through the wall, sometimes blaspheming the name of the great God whom he had denied, and then, in the misery of despair, begging that he would have mercy

on him. Once he fell from his bed in convulsive struggles, and lay foaming in horrible agony upon the floor, crying, "Will not this God whom I have denied save me too? Cannot infinite mercy extend to me?" They called in his doctor to see what he could do; but medicine could not soothe the torment of the soul. The doctor stood beside him a few moments, aghast with horror, and then fled from the spot. Another of his friends came to see him, but quickly rushed out of the room, saying it was more than he could bear. At another time he was found by his nurse, with a book in his hand, trying, in a trembling voice, to repeat some of the prayers out of it. Oh, if he had really prayed from a believing heart, there would have been mercy even for him; but he did not repent of his sins; he did not turn to Christ; and there is no other way whereby we may be saved. He said to Dr. Tronchin, "Doctor, I will give you half of what I am worth if you will give me six months' life." The doctor answered, "Sir, you cannot live six weeks." To which Voltaire replied, with a bitter groan, "Then

I shall go to hell, and you will go with me!" and soon after breathed his last.

Boys, I beseech you to consider what was the cause of that man's awful misery. It was not his circumstances, but his creed; not *what he had*, but *what he believed.* He was a rich and a famous man; kings and princes had courted his friendship; he rested upon a downy bed, and could buy the most dainty morsels with which to tempt his sickly appetite. But what were these things without peace in the heart? The Bible says, "He that believeth not shall be damned," (Mark xvi. 16;) and the torments of everlasting punishment seemed already to have begun for him.

There are several truths expressed in a simple form called the Apostles' Creed.

Let us see what it is that we declare when we say that we believe it. We begin by saying that "we believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." How do we know that God made the heaven and earth? The Bible tells us so. True; but those who cannot read the Bible may know this; we may find it out by using our own common sense. (See Rom. i. 20.) Have you

any doubt that there are such people as clockmakers in the world? No, none at all. But perhaps you never saw a clockmaker; or, if you have met the man, you never saw him at work. How can you tell that there really are clockmakers? "Why," you will say, "the ticking of the old clock in the corner is answer enough to that question: don't I know that nobody but a clockmaker could have made it? If I see what he has done, I know there has been that sort of man to do it some time or other: things can't make themselves." Now, look up to the sun over your head; watch the silver moon to-night, as she rides in and out of the clouds, and the stars that twinkle in the dark-blue sky. Who could have formed them and placed them there? You know certainly that no man did that; you know that they did not make themselves: therefore we believe that One who is Almighty—able to do all things—is the Maker of the heavens. Then look around upon the earth beneath, the tall trees over our heads, the opening buds of spring, the seed which you sow in the winter and watch in its green blade and reap when the golden ears are ready: could man

have fashioned and put them together? Could man have painted the bright leaves of the flowers, or scented them with the fragrance which we love? Those who seriously consider these things will be constrained to answer, "I believe in an Almighty Maker of the earth."

Why in one only? Because the *order* of the heavens and the earth shows that they have been planned by one, and not by many. I dare say, as it is, things are all orderly enough on your farm; but suppose every man and boy planned his own work and did what he thought best, there would soon be strange confusion. Because one mind, or one master orders all, things fit in properly together, and nothing is neglected; but it would be just the contrary if you had many masters instead of one. All things around us are orderly. "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herbs for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth." (See Ps. civ.) Above, around, beneath, whichever way we look, we must see tokens of this.

Why do we say that the Maker of all things is God? Put another "o" in this

sacred word, and you will turn it into *Good.* Once it was always written Good,—the Good One; but it has been shortened by long use. We cannot think over all the ways which our Maker has ordered for our comfort without feeling that he is good. Look only at your own body, how every part has been made to suit all your wants,—eyes, ears, hands, feet. And if you think only of one of these, how wonderfully it is contrived! How much you would suffer if any thing hurt your eye! God knew this; and he has protected it with movable lids, which shut up when any thing comes near: these, again, are fringed with soft lashes to keep out the dust; the arch of hair upon your brow catches the moisture which might run down from the forehead; tiny vessels—pipes, as you would call them—carry water to the outer side, or surface, so as to keep it always moist and clean; and the tear-duct, in the corner next the nose, serves as a drain to carry off all that is washed into it. If time and space allowed, I could prove his goodness to you in a thousand ways.

God the Father we are used to call him: it is a sweet and a true name. A father

gives his children being: without him they could never have come into the world. "God giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." (Acts xvii. 25.) Because they owe their birth to him, a father feels bound to provide for his children food and clothes and all they want; and "have we not all one Father?" "The eyes of all wait upon him, and he gives them their meat in due season. He opens his hand and satisfieth the desire of every living thing." He says that we, his children, need take no thought for what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, nor yet for our bodies what we shall put on, for our heavenly Father knows that we have need of all these things; and, if we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, they shall all be added unto us. See Ps. cxlv. 15, 16, and Matt. vi. 25, &c.

Even so far as we have gone, do you not see that it is an important matter to you whether or not you really believe these things? God himself says to us, "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if, then, I be a Father, where is mine honour? and if I be a Master, where is my fear?" I believe you have kind and

affectionate hearts; you are not used to be ungrateful to your friends; but, if you have really been touched by your heavenly Father's goodness, will you live on, day after day, and never care to obey him or strive to please him? You are not often so silly as to fly in your own master's face, or to do any thing that you know will offend him; but does it ever enter into your reckonings whether or not you are offending another Master, or are doing what you know will call down his anger upon you? A true and hearty belief of the Scriptures will bring with it that fear of God which, for our bodies as well as our souls, is the beginning of wisdom; and, as the man who neglects God is really neglecting his own comforts and cheating himself of the very things which he is striving after, so the man who seeks after God will find that "godliness hath the promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come."

CHAPTER X.

LOOK TO YOUR FOOTING.

A MAN was passing along our highroad the other day, when he saw a boy standing on the edge of the sand-pit, which was being worked at the time. "Look well to your footing, my lad," he cried; for he thought it as likely as not that the bank would give way; but the boy thought he was safe enough, and did not care to move. A few minutes after, the edge fell in with a terrible crash and buried him in the rubbish. Help was near; but it was twenty minutes before they could dig him out, and when they reached him, breath was gone: the spirit had returned to God who gave it!

My dear friends, the warning given to that poor lad is the very one I want to repeat to you to-day. *Look well to your footing!* What are you standing on? No man is safe who is not on firm ground; and there is but one good foundation for us to

plant our feet upon,—but one situation in which we can say, "All's right with me for this world and the next." If I tell you what this is, you will be able to find out whether it is your situation or not. It is when a man can say from the heart, when his life proves that he says truly, in the Bible sense, "I believe in Jesus Christ."

What has all that to do with my standing on firm ground? A great deal,—as I hope to prove to you. You know that you must die. Where do you expect to go after death? I think nineteen out of twenty will answer, "I hope I shall be saved; I hope I shall go to heaven." But you know well *all* are not saved; all do not go to heaven. What makes you think *you* shall be saved more than some others? I beg of you, look well into the matter; do not give a careless answer, taking the thing for granted, when your safety may be all a mistake. If you begin to think, you would most likely tell me, "Oh, Jesus died that we might be saved." This is indeed the main point: when you have said this, you have hit the nail on the head; but it is not enough to be able to say it. Do you know what the death of the Lord

Jesus has to do with the saving of our souls? Do you know *whose* souls will be saved by his death? If this is your footing, look well to it, and make sure that it is a firm one.

If we rightly enter into it, we shall see first, who the Lord Jesus *is*, and next, what he *did* for us. He was made in the likeness of man: he was not like the rest of us: he was God as well as man. It was God who took the suffering—the punishment—in our stead. Does this make any difference in our hope of being saved? Has it any thing to do with the firmness of our footing? It has just every thing to do with it, as I will show you by a story.

Three men, whom I shall call John, Henry and Samuel, dealt at one shop. Henry was a steady fellow: he never ran into debt, but always paid for his things week by week as he had them. John was more careless though sometimes he brought his money regularly for several weeks together; at others he went to the public-house instead, and let his bill run up to a great sum; but he never went so far as Samuel. I think Sandy Sam—as he was called, from the

colour of his hair—was one of the worst men in the place: he drank up all he earned, and, as you may fancy, he soon came to great trouble. His family were half starved, and he himself always looked ragged and miserable. One night, when the day's work was over, these three happened all to meet in the shop at the same time. Sandy Sam was sober for once, and, because his children at home were crying for bread, he had come to try to get them a shilling's worth. The shopman shook his head when Sam stepped forward to ask for it. "Where's your money, sir?" Sam muttered, "I've got none!" "Then," said the other,—"then I've no bread for you, sir: somewhere near fifty shillings you owe me at this moment for bread, and I shall let you have no more without paying for it." Sam began to beg very hard, and his two neighbours could not but feel sorry for him. John could not stand it; for, though careless, he was a kind-hearted fellow: he pulled a shilling out of his own pocket, and said to the man, "Here; get him something for his children with this." But the shopman was not disposed to let him off so easily. "If

you have that shilling to spare, sir," cried he to John, "it's mine, not your's, to give: fifteen or sixteen shillings I have down against you in my book, and your shillings must go to make that straight before you look after other people's affairs." John felt vexed, but he had nothing to say: it was reasonable enough that he could not do for others while he was in debt himself. But now Henry spoke:—"Come, Mr. shopman, you know you have nothing against me: give me an extra shilling's worth of bread for this," (handing out the money as he spoke,) "and let Sandy Sam carry it home to his little ones." "You do as you please, sir," replied the other: "I never have any thing standing against you:" and Henry sent Sandy Sam away with two loaves of bread, and a lighter heart into the bargain.

Have I made it plain to you that only those can undertake for others *who are not in debt themselves*? Man was needy, perishing: if ever poor creatures wanted help, we did; but, like John and Samuel, we could not help each other, because all alike were in the same evil case. We may, and must, grieve over each others' danger and misery,

but we cannot raise a finger to help each other against the evils which beset the soul. In bodily trouble, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, man may do much for his fellows; but what are good things for the body, if the soul is ruined? And about this the Bible warns us:—"None can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." (Ps. xlix. 7.) The bright angels of heaven watch over us with loving care, but they cannot clear off the debt which stands against us in God's book. "Behold," the Bible says, "his angels he charges with folly." (Job iv. 18.) There was but One of whom it could be said, he "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth," and this One—his own self—"bare our sins in his own body on the tree." (1 Pet. ii. 22, 24.) Sin is our debt to God, but, unlike other debts, it can't be paid off with money,—only with punishment. Jesus only could be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities; with *his* stripes we are healed. This makes it so needful to the firmness of our hope that we should believe Jesus is very God indeed: we could have no comfort if we did not see that the

One who has suffered in our stead was able, as well as willing, because he had no debts of his own.

While Jesus was God, he could not have died for us. God is a Spirit: a spirit could not have taken the punishment; a spirit could not have been nailed to the cross. The Son of God knew that he should have nothing but suffering while he remained in the body; yet he entered into it with this very purpose and intention, that he might suffer in our stead. Never forget this, boys; hold to it; for it is your life. It is not only true that One who was able undertook for us, but it is also true that what he undertook he did. We believe that he did suffer under Pontius Pilate,—that he was crucified, dead and buried for us. We believe it, because we have it on the best of proof,—the word of that God who cannot lie.

So far we have looked a little into the sureness of our footing, the firm ground for our hope. Now let me ask you whether this is really the spot where *your* feet are standing? You may say so every week; but everybody knows that *saying* we are in the right place won't do, if really we are in

the wrong one all the time. How shall we know? How do you know a tree? By its fruits. I think I have said so before; but, if I have, I must repeat it here. Just so you and I shall know ourselves,—by our fruits, by our lives. Some of you have led a sad, rough life, boys, but you have got hearts, for all that: you can feel when any one does you a kindness,—perhaps none more so. I have been acquainted with working-boys like those whom I now address, in the course of my life; and I never met with one that did not know how to be grateful and affectionate to his friends. This makes me sure that if you had once seen, by the Spirit of God, how much we owe to the Lord Jesus Christ, you would not—you *could* not—go on, day after day, in all those ways which you know grieve our blessed Saviour at his very heart. But if any of those who read this are truly loving the Lord Jesus and striving to please him in all they do, I take it as a joyful proof that all is right with them: they have a sure footing; they are standing on the Rock of Ages, and, come what may or what will, they are safe forever. Dear reader, I beseech you to find

out which way it is with you. Perhaps you thought poor M—— a silly fellow when he took no notice of the warning he had from the other. Will you not listen to me when I beseech you, for the sake of your never-dying soul, *Look well to your footing?*

The Fortune-Teller. p 85.

CHAPTER XI.

SOMETHING COMING.

Boys, did you ever see a gypsy-woman who wanted to tell you your fortune? If I mistake not, there are few lads in country or town who have not heard of these people and perhaps talked with them too. And if ever you met one when you had a spare shilling in your pocket, it is very likely that you may have crossed the woman's hand with it, that she might tell *your* fortune, and your heart beat quick while you listened to some wonderful tale of all the good things which she said were going to happen to you. Yet all the while your own good sense tells you that there is no truth in her story: she is no more able to tell your fortune than you are to tell her's, only she is wicked enough to say these things when she knows all the time that they are not true, and you are silly enough to half believe her. Why is it so? I am not sure that you know your-

selves, but I think I can tell you. It is because we have all such a great wish to look into the future, *to know what is going to happen to us.* It is natural to us; we can't help it. Where there are many together, if one person will say only what he fancies is going to happen, you may notice how the others all come crowding around him to hear what it is; and the more we can trust to his wisdom and good sense—the more we think he is likely really to know—the more eager we are to hear him.

God knows that there is this wish in our hearts: he himself put it there; and, in order to grant a natural wish, he has himself told us many things which are going to happen: he has written about them in the Bible. Now, though we may like to hear what *men* have to say about the times that are coming, it cannot really make a difference to us, because they are only guessing. If they tell us some wonderful good fortune is going to turn up, we can't trust to it; if they forewarn us of some terrible trouble, we are not disposed greatly to disturb ourselves, because we say, "They cannot surely know: things may come to pass just the

other way, after all." No man, woman or child knows certainly what is going to happen five minutes hence; but God *really* knows. As he sees backwards all that has ever happened since the world was made, so he sees forwards all that will happen until the end. "I am God," he says; "and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning." (Isa. xlvi. 9, 10.) And what does God say is going to happen? Something that will make a greater change than war, or famine, or any of the great things of which our minds are often filled. But this of which I speak concerns every living soul in the world—ay, and those who have lived, and are now gone from us and laid so quietly in their graves, as if they were never to waken again. God says, the Lord Jesus Christ, who ascended into heaven after he rose from the dead and has been there ever since, sitting at God's right hand, is coming back again! He is coming to judge the whole world, and every eye shall see him.

It is so very long—more than eighteen hundred years—since any one has seen the Lord Jesus Christ, that it is difficult for us

at all to enter into this. Except for the help which we know he has sent to his people, except for the punishment which we sometimes see that he sends upon the wicked, we might be ready to think God had left us altogether to ourselves. It is that he has had long patience with us. Day by day he is grieved and provoked, but he is silent: it seems as though he took no notice: swearers take his holy name in vain, men break his Sabbaths and even dare to mock him in his house; but he is silent, and they think he does not see. Is it so? What does the Bible tell us about it? "His eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men." "He knows our down-sitting and our up-rising: he understands our thoughts afar off. There is not a word in our tongue but he knows it altogether." He sees all, and he sets all down in his book for a reckoning against us, none the less because he does it in silence, without speaking. He is waiting in great long-suffering to give us one chance more, if I may say so, of turning to him and seeking the saving of our souls through Jesus.

But he will not wait always. Some who

have read and thought most about it believe that the time is almost up; and anyhow, as surely as every milestone you pass on a journey brings you by one mile nearer to the end, so surely every year that passes over us brings his coming by one year the nearer. He says himself, "Behold, I come quickly. Be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." Notice this, for it is very important. He means to come just when we are *not* looking for him,—as he says in another place, "like a thief in the night."

What time does a thief choose for breaking into a house? In the middle of the night, when all are quietly laid to sleep, easy and happy and without fear, giving no thought to their danger. Then he surprises them and brings ruin to the sleepers. Thus it is the Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven, when no one is looking for him, when the fears of sinners are laid to sleep, and, with easy, careless hearts, they never dream of the ruin that is coming,—that is even at their very doors. Some will be at work in the fields and some busy in the house,—the children at school, the men

out of doors, the women at home,—some eating and drinking, some going to church or on their way to be married,—all busy that day as they have been for years before, and looking for no check or change. Then he will come, as the lightning, sudden and awful and bright, shining from one end of the sky to the other, so that all must see: he will come in power and great glory.

Does he come alone? No, indeed; for he brings all his saints with him. All his servants, who have died and gone up to heaven, will come back again with him, thousands upon thousands,—ay, more than you could number. Nor these alone; the angels will be there,—the bright and glorious angels, of whom we have so often heard but never seen: in number ten thousand times ten thousand, they shall stand round his great white throne. Our eyes shall see it, our ears shall hear his voice; for, willing or unwilling, every soul in whom is the breath of life must go to stand before him. The graves cannot shelter their dead, for at the sound of the archangel's trumpet the dead shall rise; earth and sea alike must give up the bodies they have held so

long. Before him shall be gathered all nations; all who have ever lived, from Adam and Eve to the youngest infant born the very day of the Lord's appearing, small and great, alike must stand before God.

What for? To be judged. I am anxious you should clearly understand what this means. You know how it is when the court—the time for the trials—comes on in your neighbourhood. The prisoners who have been shut up in the prisons are brought out into the courts; the witnesses step forward and declare what each one has done worthy of punishment; the judge and the jury search into it to see whether it is so indeed; and, if all is made clear, the judge gives sentence upon the guilty. The thief is to be imprisoned, or the murderer to be hung, as the case may be; and, when all is over, they are led away to receive the due reward of their deeds.

My dear readers, have you known and thought and remembered that such a day of judgment is coming for each one of us? All powerless to escape, we shall each one be led up before God's awful judgment-seat, to give an account of the deeds done

in the body. "Why," you may say, "I never wronged anybody: who will have any thing to witness against me?" If it depended on the witness of our neighbours, I grant you, some of us might come off clear; but it is not a man, but a book, will witness against us in that day,—God's book of remembrance. It is an awful thought that, day by day, when we have fancied that because he looked on in silence he neither knew nor cared what we did, God has been keeping a book of reckoning against us. Every oath the swearer has sworn, God heard it in silence, but he wrote it down; every cunning theft managed so well in the dark night that to this hour none but the thief knows who did it, God saw it, and he wrote it down. Every day that you have passed without bending your knees in prayer, God knew about it and set it down. Nay, every idle word, the folly and the nonsense which slips out of our mouths we hardly know how, which we forget as soon as it is spoken, God has not forgotten it: if you could open his book, you would find every sentence recorded there. What need will there be of other witnesses? The Bible says we shall

be judged out of those things which are written in the books.

One by one, as we are judged, we shall be sent either to the right hand or the left. The Bible says God will divide all nations into two parties, as a shepherd might separate the sheep of his flock from the goats; and he will put the sheep (his own people) on his right hand, but all the others on his left. "Then shall he say to those on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world;" that is, they are to go back with him to everlasting joy and glory. But to those on the left hand he will say, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; and these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

My dear readers, in plain language I have set before you *what God says is going to happen;* and I believe you will agree with me that no other change which can possibly happen to us is of so much importance as the change which the return of the Lord Jesus from heaven will bring. I have not

liked to confuse you by pointing out, as I went along, the places in the Bible from which my words have been taken; but I will add the chapters and verses at the end of this, that, if you please, you may find out for yourselves where they are; and remember, as you read, that they are the sayings of that God who cannot lie. Now, let me put one question. *If the Lord Jesus Christ was to come before the clock strikes again, and begin his judgment, on which side would he put you?* You know, though I do not. Your own heart will tell you. You know in your own heart what God has written down about you in his book, and according to that you will be judged. Are you afraid when you think of it? Would you be glad if you were able to get at it, to blot out most of the things that are set down there about you? Ah, boys, we cannot do this for ourselves or for each other; but there is One who, if we seek his help, is able and willing to do it for us. The Lord Jesus Christ, himself our Judge, knew that nothing but his blood could blot out our sins; and for this he shed his blood when he died upon the cross. It will cleanse those awful pages from all the

sins recorded against us there,—as it was said by a poor dumb boy, "When Jesus has passed his bleeding hand over the writing, God will not be able to read it, even if he held it up to the sun for light." Oh, begin now a hearty resolve that, God helping you, you will leave nothing standing in his book against you from day to day. Never close your eyes at night without begging first that his blood may wash out all that has been set down against you since the morning. Then, when you have truly learned and felt what we owe to him, I know that you will give up your heart to him, and seek truly to serve him as long as you live.

(For Bible proofs of what has been said, see Acts i. 11; Ps. xi. 4, and cxxxix.; Rev. xxii. 20; Luke xii. 40; 1 Thess. v. 2; Matt. xxiv. 36, &c.; Zech. xiv. 5; 2 Thess. i. 7; Rev. xx. 11–13; Matt. xxv. 31, &c.; 1 John i. 7, &c.)

CHAPTER XII.

WORK WITHIN.

I KNOW some lads who have a great spirit for work. I like to see this. I think it speaks well for a lad if he is not afraid to undertake hard work, when he hears there is something particular to be had by it. I know many who like better to have their work by the piece,—because this enables them to earn more money, by working over-hours. I guess many farm-boys look upon harvest-time as the best part of the year. True, some farmers' boys have to be up by four in the morning and scarcely leave the fields before eight at night; but you don't mind this, when you think of the good round sum of money you hope to get at the month's end. The wise man said, long ago, "In all labour there is profit;" and you are well disposed to agree with him, *with one exception.* If I am not very much mistaken, by far the greater number of the working-

boys who will read these pages—honest, industrious, hard-working fellows as they may be—are afraid of attempting any hard work, any thing that is difficult, for the good of their souls. Promise them four shillings a day for mowing, and they will work like horses and thank you for giving them the chance; promise them, in God's name, a home in heaven—a life of eternal glory—if they will seek after the saving of their souls, and they will answer by their lives, if not by their lips, that they feel it too much trouble. But, oh, boys, if you could go down to the gates of hell now and ask one within to speak and tell you which way really brings the most trouble in the end,—God's service, or the devil's,—what answer do you think you would get? "Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his labour." 1 Cor. iii. 8.

Now, I am not going to deny that there is much work, and very hard work, to be done in your hearts, if, on thinking the matter over, you seriously wish to be a Christian. It is work which has busied me for many years past, and I know something of what you will have to go through in it.

If we did not keep in view the "joy set before us," we should often be down-hearted and willing to give up. But there is one mistake very commonly made in setting about this work, which so entirely checks and hinders it that I am anxious to warn you against it.

I think I can explain my meaning best by giving you an instance which came under my own knowledge. I am the less afraid to do so, as poor M—— N—— is now laid in one of those far-distant graves near the hospitals in the East, where so many who fell in battle are sleeping the sleep of death. He was about nineteen when he began to see plainly, from what he heard in church and elsewhere, that it is a good thing to be a Christian,—good for this world, and good for the next. He began to try. He determined to give up bad habits and to lead a new and steady life, and set about it much in the same way in which he would have determined to plant all his mother's potatoes in a particular time: I believe he thought that he was as able for the one as for the other, in spite of earnest warnings on the subject.

He did not seek for a new heart, and he did not see that it was not possible for him to do God's work without it. It proved not to be so easy as he expected to give up drinking, and to stop the bad bad words which he had been in the habit of using, as they rose to his lips; it was not easy to break off with his old companions in sin. If you have ever tried it yourself, you will know that the hardest work ever done on the farm or in the shop is not so hard as giving up doing wrong. M——found it so; and, before he had been leading a new life three months, he gave it up. Whether he ever began again after he left home, I cannot tell you; but I earnestly hope that, if he did, it was in a different way, or else I know he would still have found the work too hard for him. *We cannot do God's work with our hearts as they are.* If your spade was so broken and spoiled that you could not dig with it, you would say, "I must get a new one before I shall be able to do my garden." Our hearts are so bad that we *cannot* by any means do any one thing that is right with them as they are. If we really wish and intend to take up with

God's ways, we must first of all get them made new again, or *renewed*, as the Bible calls it. And where are we to get our hearts made new? I cannot give you a plainer answer than in the words of part of a text: —"He saved us . . . . by the renewing of the Holy Ghost." It is God the Holy Ghost who must do this for you and me. He, and he alone, can change our vile hearts; he alone can make it possible for us to come to Jesus, to serve God, to fight against sin. It is of no use for you to think you will be a Christian—your wishing to save your soul—without him; for without him we can do nothing. He must give us the will to do right, or we shall not even desire it. He must strengthen us to bring our good wishes to pass, or they will never come to any thing.

Now, I feel, boys, when I begin to speak of God the Holy Spirit, that I am speaking to you of one to whom you are (most of you) altogether strangers. Sometimes you do think of God the Father, who made you; sometimes at Christmas, perhaps, you do think of God the Son, who came down to be a man for us; but about God the

Holy Ghost you are disposed neither to know nor to care. I know at least one reason for this. You have never felt that you wanted the Holy Ghost to do any thing for you. You have never found out your need of him. I asked a boy the other day something about the doctor: he could not tell me what I wanted to know, "for," said he, "I have never been ill in my life." He had never felt the need of the doctor, and did not care to know about him. I believe that this is your case. You have never felt the need of the Holy Spirit's help; and so you have never cared to come to him. How shall I convince you how urgently, how absolutely, you are needing at this moment the help of the Holy Spirit? Will you for one moment think of yourself? Consider what you are used to speak of, to think of, to do, from day to day,—what company you have kept, what things you like best to do,—what, in short, are your habits and ways of going on. Then ask yourself, "Am I fit to go to heaven? Should I even be happy to go as I am and stand before God? Would the bright and holy angels be the sort of company that I should choose to keep?" Oh,

boys, every one must answer these things for himself; but I think you know and feel that there must be a great change in you before you are ready for heaven. Even if you *could* go as you are, would you be easy there? The joys of heaven, as the Bible tells us of them, are not your joys; its talk is not of the things which you care to hear about; you would think its blessed work dull and hard and unwelcome. The presence of God, which is the very beginning and ending of the gladness of his people in heaven, would bring terror, not comfort, to you.

If this is indeed your case, does it not prove to you that there must be a great change in you before you can be ready for heaven? And how is this change to be brought about? Not by yourselves,—the work is too hard for you,—but by the Holy Spirit making your heart altogether new and different. Do you ask, "Can he do it?" I will answer you by another question:—Do you think there is any thing which the Almighty God *cannot do?* His very name is "The Spirit of might," of power. Only look round your own village at the people who

are now serving God. You know how they have been changed from what they once were: you see that the drunkard has become sober, that the Sabbath-breaker has learned to love his Bible and his church; you see that bad tempers have become gentle and patient: they are not like their old selves; they have become new creatures. How? Not by setting it down in their own hearts that they will lead new lives, and trying to bring it to pass by themselves, but by setting it down in their minds that they would seek the help of the Holy Spirit, who alone can do this work in us.

I guess what you are now ready to say:—"I shall never try to do right unless *I like it better* than I do now: it is not only very hard, but it seems to me dull work. If I become a Christian, I must give up all my best fun and pleasure; and, as for a Christian's pleasures, there is no denying that I think the time in church some of the dullest in the week. I never hear a sermon that I don't think too long, unless I fall asleep or get to chatting with the one next to me." If you were to speak out your mind honestly, I believe this is

what some of you have often thought and felt. I am not surprised to hear it: it is only another proof of what I have said,—that unless you are changed, renewed by the Holy Spirit, you will not even wish to do right. If you knew that you were drowning in a pond, you would not count those dull words in which some one told you how you might get help. If the Holy Spirit opens your eyes to see that your soul is in danger of sinking into hell-fire, you will not feel dull in church. He will make us care for what we have never cared before; he will make us love what we used to hate, and hate what we used to love. If you ask me how, I cannot well tell you. How is it that after the cool of the summer night you see the drooping flowers lift their heads, bright and living again, when they were ready to die? The dew has fallen; softly it came down from the sky, when there were none to see or hear: how it fell, how it did its work, we cannot say; but you see that the flowers which were perishing are strong and healthy now. The blessed Spirit is like the dew from heaven upon our hearts. How is it that, when you are at work in the

harvest-fields, ready to sink under the burning sun, if a light breeze springs up, it seems to give you new power and strength? You cannot see the wind; you know not whence it comes, nor how it works upon your hot and weary frame; but this you know, that it has just done for you what you could not do for yourself, and what you sorely needed. The blessed Spirit is likened in God's word to the wind of heaven.

But one thing only can really make you to understand this matter. Go, seek for the Spirit's help in your own heart, cry to God in right earnest, that, by sending his blessed Spirit upon you, he would do for you and in you what you cannot do for yourself, and you will know better than if I spent a year in trying to explain it to you. He is pledged to give this gift to those who ask; for he has said, "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!" Luke xi. 13.

CHAPTER XIII.

FRIENDS AND FRIENDSHIP.

EVERYBODY knows how much boys like to get together. When their day's work is done, and they have had their supper, you will seldom find one of them alone. If it is summer-time, there will be a large party on the green playing at cricket or leap-frog; if it is winter, they will gather round the largest fire they can find: well for them if it is at the evening school, or the reading-room, and not at the public-house. This is communion, or union *with*, uniting one with another; and I need not stop to tell you what a delightful thing it is when people are pretty much of one mind. The Bible tells us, "It is not good for a man to be alone;" and we have most of us found out for ourselves that, if it is not good, neither is it pleasant.

But there is one thing I want to point out to you about it. *There are two sorts of communion*, a right and a wrong; and,

whereas the right sort is one of the happiest things in the world, the wrong sort has made more misery and done more mischief than perhaps any one thing you could mention. You have only to look round the village for proof of this. I am sure you can think of some lad you know very well, who may be a well-meaning fellow in himself, but he has got mixed up with a bad set. On Sunday he unites with them in strolling about the fields instead of going to church, and on weekday evenings he spends time and money with them in drinking and smoking. What is the consequence? He never has much money in his pocket, or respectable clothes to wear. Left alone, he might have been as well off as any other young man who is earning good wages; but he is drawn into their ways, and therefore into their troubles, by having communion with them.

On the other hand, turn in your own mind to one of the steady, prosperous boys who I hope are to be found in every village. I know of one at this moment, who has never been a day out of work since he left school, and never knew what it was to spend a sixpence on what he did not want. If

you meet W—— S—— in the fields, his frock is always tidy; and he wears a good suit on Sundays. How is it he is better off than others? Not because he has more money, or because he was born with a better nature. Indeed I do not even know that he is a pious boy; but he has been brought up by godly parents, and by little and little, you scarcely know how, he has fallen into their ways. It is the consequence of having had good communion.

But I can fancy a boy reading this, and saying, "Well, I can't help myself here: every one knows my family has the name of being the worst in the place, but that is no fault of mine. I can't break off with my father or my brothers and sisters, and say I'll have nothing to do with them, because I want to keep company with a better sort of people." I know you cannot; I quite agree with you there: we all of us have a great deal of communion about which we have no choice. What the home-party are with whom you gather around the fire, and what the men are with whom you work in the yard, has been ordered for you, and, if they are bad, so far you cannot help

having bad communion; but I wish to say two things to you about it,—one as it regards yourself, and one as it regards them.

For yourself, when you are obliged to be with wicked people, deal with them as you would if you were obliged to mix with those who had the smallpox or some other catching complaint. Do them all the good you can, and see to it that they do you no harm. Do all that in you lies to be kind and friendly; strive always to be ready to comfort them in sorrow and help them in difficulties; but take care—ah! as you value your own peace,—take care that you do not fall in with them any closer than you can help. If you do, you will be as bad as they are; you will catch infection which would be sickness, and perhaps death, to your soul! Hold out, with God's help, firm as a rock when they want you to be as they are, or to do as they do.

Once more, as it regards them. We are never obliged to settle down satisfied with a bad thing and make no effort to better it. Take it for granted that you are obliged, against your will, to keep company with bad people the greater part of the day: there

is much you can do, with God's help, to turn this bad communion into good, if you are willing to try. Only begin at the right end: begin with your own heart. Come to the Lord Jesus in prayer to save your soul. By diligently reading your Bible and walking in God's ways, prove for yourself the joy of being a Christian; and then you may win them over to doing the same. Example is better than precept: so I will tell you a true story of how much a lad of seventeen was permitted to do for his people at home.

J—— S——'s family were, I believe, among the worst in the place,—thieves, drunkards, swearers and Sabbath-breakers; and J——, a tall lad of his age, was in every way as bad as the rest, until it pleased God to bless what he heard in his Bible-class to the saving of his soul. Then he began to see where he had been wrong, and to pray in right earnest for himself and for them. He used to spend hours over his Bible in the evenings; and, however early he had to be up with his horses in the morning, he always found time first to kneel down and ask God's blessing on the day. When his mother found that his new no-

tions made him so loving and thoughtful and careful for her, and so kind to the younger children, she began to think it was a good thing he had taken up with, and became more willing to listen while he read the Bible; and when he begged her so earnestly to go to church, and agreed to take care of the baby himself if she would go there once in the day, she did not like to hold out long in her refusal; and, after she had been a few times, she learned to like it for herself, and now, I believe, she often goes twice in the day. J——'s teacher put a little book of family prayers into his hands, and by dint of a little affectionate persuasion he induced his mother and the younger children to kneel down with him every night, while he read aloud one of the prayers for them. It is scarcely too much to say that that home has been changed from a hell into a heaven. The communion which he could not avoid with his own family, which must at first have been most distressing to a godly boy, had become all that he could wish. I need not remark upon this: only let me say that if you find fault with your home-party, and are disposed to lay all

the blame of your bad ways on their shoulders, I beg you will try to follow J——S——'s example, and prove for yourself whether God is not able to turn the bad sort of communion into good.

So much for the communion about which we have no choice. But we often hear of the communion of saints,—that is, the uniting together of good people; and, truly, if half the mischief that has been done in the world has been done by the communion of bad people, I believe more than half the good which has been done in the world has been done by the communion of saints. Those only can rightly tell the joy and comfort it brings who have proved it for themselves. Choose a God-fearing man for your friend, and he will stay by you through thick and thin: he will do for you to the utmost of his power. The devil's servants are good friends in sunshiny weather; but when the storms of trouble come they will leave you to shift for yourself: they will like it all very well so long as you are doing for them, but when it comes to be your turn to have something out of them, you will look for it in vain.

God knew how much comfort we should have by uniting together: therefore, when the Lord Jesus Christ went back to heaven, he formed his people into a Church. Your own sense will tell you at once that this Church does not mean the building of stone and mortar in which people meet in worship. I may explain it to you by saying that the building is God's *house;* good people are God's *household,*—those whom the *house holds,*—one family together. God's people feel like one family: they have one Father, even God; they look forward to one and the same home in heaven. You will find the children of the same family alike in many things; and those who belong to God's household are so much alike in their joys and their sorrows, their hopes and their fears, that if two of them meet together they never remain strangers long. They are scattered all over the world, for they are a *catholic*, or universal, household; but, whether black or white, rich or poor, one always feels, when he finds another, that he has found a friend, and when they have communion together it is so sweet it seems almost like heaven begun on earth. For

this life, they know that their sins are washed away in the blood of Jesus, freely forgiven for his sake; for the next world, they have a sure hope that their bodies shall be raised from the dead, fashioned like unto his glorious body, never to know pain or sorrow any more. So, united by this one hope and love, they are ready to help and stand by one another both in the difficulties they meet with and in the good works they undertake; and it is by their union together that they have been strong to bring about all the plans for doing good to others, of which you have heard in the great Bible, Missionary and Sunday-school Societies.

Even in a little village it is wonderful how much two or three Christian boys may do for each other and for those about them by uniting together. If time and space allowed, I could give you beautiful accounts of the good which has been done, and the evil which has been stopped, by several lads joining together in earnest efforts to serve God themselves, and to help others to do so also. Do not for a moment think that, because there is danger in bad communion, you will try to satisfy yourself without

having any friend at all. You will be greatly the loser if you do. If you have not already chosen a "companion," look out for the steady, God-fearing lads with whom you can spend an hour in the winter evenings or get up a game of cricket in the summer; do all in your power to add to their happiness, and I make no doubt but you will soon find how much they will add to your's. You will know, if you come to think about it, whether the boy, nearly your own age, who has taken your fancy and seems equally disposed to seek after you, smokes, or drinks, or swears, or breaks the Sabbath. If he does, I beseech you, have no more to do with him than you can help; not that I would urge you to be uncivil or disobliging to any, but there is all the difference between making friends with a bad man and behaving well to him. The warning God has given us about it in the Proverbs is worth its weight in gold at your age:—"He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

CHAPTER XIV.

GOD'S RULES.

"Thou shalt have none other gods but me."

I WANT to say a few words to you to-day about the Commandments. You all know by experience—that is, by having had it yourself—what a commandment means. Every morning, before you have set off for your day's work, you have had an order, or a commandment, from the foreman as to what you are to do or where you are to go that day. A commandment simply means something which we are commanded, or told, to do. Now, the orders you get from the foreman, or your master, only concern you and the others who may be working with you; but there are orders which have been given to every one of us alike, and they stand good for all our lives, instead of only for a day or a week. Perhaps you will have guessed already that I mean the orders

—the Commandments—we have had from God. Now, I do not need to tell you how important it is for you to know and to understand what your *master's* orders are about your work: if you disobeyed them, even by a mistake, you know well enough that you would get into trouble; perhaps you would lose your place, or have part of your wages stopped when pay-night came round. If this has been your case once or twice, it has made you very careful about keeping your master's orders. But I find very few working-lads who care about keeping God's orders. Nay, I am not sure whether there would not be a feeling of this kind in your heart if I urged them upon you:—"It is all very well for my minister or teacher to talk to me, but I shall do just as I please about it. I shall not trouble myself about keeping God's commandments unless it suits me."

It is true, in one way, that you may do as you please. God drives no one. He gives us commandments, but he does not force us to keep them. He leaves it entirely to our own choice whether we do so or not. There are two ways to walk in,—

the way of keeping them, and the way of breaking them; and we must decide for ourselves which way we take. Only, mind this, that, if we choose to break them, *we must take the consequences;* you and I need not obey God's commandments unless we like, but *we must—we must* receive the punishment of those who are disobedient if we break them. We need not now listen to the loving voice which bids us keep away from things which would make us miserable, but one day we *must* listen to the angry voice which says to the wicked, "Depart, ye cursed, into the fire prepared for the devil and his angels." I pray God to open your eyes, that you may see the plain truth of this matter. Ask yourself, as we go through the commandments, not only, "Do I choose to keep this law?" but, "Do I choose to take the consequences of breaking it?"

But there is another thing. How do we know these commandments are from God? We did not hear him give them. If you had been there on the day they were given, you would not have seen much room to doubt it. They were not given in our country, but in a wilderness, many, many

hundred miles away. It is difficult for you, who have always lived in the midst of grain and grass fields, to fancy what a lonely, barren, dreary place a wilderness is. Not a church or a house to be seen for miles and miles away; no fences nor pleasant hedges dividing the wide plains, no signs of a road which might remind you that others had been there before. You may travel for days together without meeting a living soul. But it was not lonely on the day of which I speak; for thousands, nay, hundreds of thousands, of men, women and children were gathered there. What for? For this one thing,—to listen to the voice of God. Three days before, orders had been sent them to wash their clothes and make ready to come into the presence of God; and now, with trembling hearts and solemn expectations, they assembled at the foot of the hill, as had been appointed. It was a high hill,—far higher than the highest and steepest hill you have ever seen; its top seemed to reach right up into the clouds. And it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the

trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people that were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the nether [that means the lower] part of the mount. And the mount was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord came down upon it in fire; and the smoke went up as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked (or trembled) greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. See Exod. xix. 10, &c.

We should not have doubted if we had been there; we should not have questioned for a moment that it was God's voice we heard; and I think, if we had been asked, as they were, whether we would obey, we should have answered, as they did, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." And what, then, are the commandments —the orders—which we and all the world have received from our Master in heaven? It is plain that we *cannot* do them unless we understand them, and that we *shall* not do them unless we remember them; so that,

in the hope of helping you both to understand and remember them, I shall ask you to read carefully the few words I am going to say to you about them.

Most likely you know which comes first: —"Thou shalt have none other gods but me." As the Lord God put it first, it seems as if he thought it of the most consequence; but of all the ten I think it is the one of which people take the least notice. They think it is meant for the poor heathen who fall down and worship idols of wood and stone, —not for them. So it is meant for the heathen; but it is also meant for every man and woman and child who is not converted, —who is not a Christian indeed. Perhaps you think that the One to whom we kneel down and say our prayers is our God, and no one else; but this is a mistake. In our country, at least, very few people say their prayers to the One who is really their God. *Whoever we think about most of all*, that one is our God, whoever or whatever it may be. A man may always say his prayers to the great God up in heaven; but if he is caring most of all for some one on earth—if his

heart is set upon some one on earth—the one on earth is his god: he only mocks the great God in heaven by pretending to worship him. We all know that the name of a thing matters little: it is the *doing* which makes the difference. For instance, there are two farmers in your parish. I will suppose their names to be Mr. Smith and Mr. Brown. If you called yourself Mr. Smith's man, and yet spent all the day in working for Mr. Brown, I should like to know which of the two is really your employer. It is just the same—I would speak reverently—with the great God. It is not your *calling* him your God which makes him so: the one thing for which you live, for which you care most of all, that is your God. You have read stories in the newspapers about poor old misers,—men who loved their gold, or their money, so much that they would stint themselves for food, and wear rags instead of clean clothes, and live in a shed instead of a good house, all to save a little money; not because they had not plenty of it, but just because they loved money better than any thing else, so that they would fain

hoard up every penny instead of spending it. The miser's gold is his god.*

If you turn it over in your mind, you may think of many things which you have seen in this way turned into gods, or idols, by those who have set their hearts upon them; but as what our neighbours do will make no difference in our standing at the last day, let me affectionately beg of you to find out who is *your* God. Who or what do *you* think of most of all? Where is your heart set? If I were to guess, I should say it is not on money: from the way in which farming-lads spend their money as soon as they get it, I don't think many of them are tempted to make an idol of it. Neither do I think it is your clothes. On the contrary, I should like to see you pay much more attention to your clothes than you do. A boy who saves up his money to buy good clothes, and will take a little pains to clean his shoes and brush his hair, so as to make himself look clean and nice, is much more likely to turn out well than a slovenly fellow who hardly cares whether

* See Eph. v. 5, where the covetous man is called an idolater.

he looks like a beggar or a respectable working-man. But if I saw you taking such a pride in being smart that you thought more of your dress than of your soul, I should say there might be a danger even for you of making an idol of it.

Eating and drinking is what some lads set their hearts upon above every thing else. If you were to hear them talk, and could see what their minds are full of, you would find that their thoughts run more upon what they shall eat and drink than upon any other thing you could mention. Of these the Bible says, "Their god is their belly." (Phil. iii. 19.) My dear friends, this looks so bad when it is set down in black and white that I think if ever it has been so with you, you will soon feel ashamed of it. I do not deny that the enjoyment of our food is a harmless one, and one which God intended we should have; but to enjoy it when it comes, and to set our hearts upon it, are two very different things. You would be ashamed to let your mind be taken up with an infant's toy: you would say you have grown beyond that, and would not so make a fool of yourself. I ask you, is it

better, or worse, to be caring for nothing but a brute creature's pleasures? What would you call a man, who has a soul that must live forever in heaven or hell, and who sells it or gives it in exchange for the pleasures of eating and drinking?

I might go on to point out the dangers of setting our hearts upon pleasuring, and many other things, but I shall leave you to find them out for yourselves, and only ask one thing more. You must have a god of some kind. There is no one who has his senses who has not some god to whom he has given his heart. Is the god whom you are serving able to save your soul? Is he able to deliver you from the consequences of breaking the first order given us by the God over all in heaven, "*Thou shalt have none other gods but me*"? And if you wish to know what reason there is why we should love him and serve him above all others, turn to St. John's Gospel iii. 16, and find the words, "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

CHAPTER XV.

CHURCH-TIME.

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."

WHAT do you do with your Sundays? I know it is never a question what you are to do with Monday and Tuesday and the other days in the week, because they belong to your employer. In exchange for your wages, you have given your time on these days to him, and the day's work, whether in winter or summer, leaves you but little time to spare when it is over, to lay out after your own choice. But, unless you work under a shepherd, or it happens to be a time of the year when you are

wanted to keep the birds off the corn, you generally have Sunday to yourself. How do you spend it? I can guess your answer: —"Oh, I go to church once every Sunday; sometimes twice, if it suits me." I am glad to hear it. The man or boy who, by his own choice, never sets foot in a place of worship, is standing on the edge of ruin. But let me ask you again, What do you go to church for? The answer which I have had from one I believe I should get from fifty working-boys:—"I go because it's Sunday." Is that a good reason? One day in the week is called market-day. The farmers and many of the women go to the town on that day. Why? Because it is market-day. If that was the only reason, they might go and sit there for a while and come home again. But what would they be the better? Your own good sense tells you how silly that would be. They go to the town to do their business,—business which can be done better in the town than it can be done at home, and better on the market-day than on any other day of the seven. If they came back, and had trifled away all the time, so as to leave undone the very thing for which they

went, you would call them the more fools for their pains.

My young friends, bear with me if I say that I fear this is the very thing most of you are in the habit of doing when you go to church on Sunday. It is the place where we go to attend to the most important piece of business that any of us have to see after; and yet you have often been and sat there a while, and come back again, without even giving it a thought! The church is God's temple,—the place where he is,—the place where we may find him,—the place where we *shall* find him; for "the Lord is in his holy temple." (See Hab. ii. 20.) If you come to your minister's house, it is not to sit a while and look about you and then go out again. You would not think of insulting him like that. You only venture to go when you have some business to transact with him,—to get his help or advice in some way; and for that you know you will be welcome. But to go for nothing at all but to amuse yourself, or to idle your time away, you have quite too much good feeling even to be tempted to do it. And what do you think we come to God's house for? We

come because we have something to do with God, and his house is the place where we may expect to find him, and to be able to transact the solemn business which has to be attended to between him and our souls.

If you give a few minutes to considering what our situation and circumstances are, you will be better able to see what I mean. Every day of our lives we are in danger: in danger from fire and water,—from thunder-storms in the summer,—from perishing cold in the winter; in danger from accidents, in danger from illness,—worst of all, in danger to our souls, of sinking into hell. We cannot save ourselves from any one of these dangers. We go to speak to God about them,—to cry unto him, as we reckon over one and another. From all evil and mischief, from sin, from God's wrath, from lightning and tempest, from pestilence and famine, from murder and from sudden death, we pray "Good Lord, deliver us." The corn cannot ripen, the fruit cannot grow, without God's sending good seasons: we go to ask him to give and preserve to our use the kindly fruits of the earth, so as in due time we may enjoy them.

If you had done something that had vexed your employer, and you knew you were going to suffer for it, you would be glad of a chance to speak with him quietly and beg him to overlook it. Every week you and I have done many things to anger our Master in heaven; punishment is hanging over us, and we go to confess and say we have done the things which we ought not to have done, and left undone the things which we ought to have done: have mercy upon us miserable offenders; spare thou those who confess their faults; for we know that we have his promise, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." We are ignorant: it is often hard for us to find out what is the best, or right thing for us to do. We go to learn from the Bible what is the way in which we should walk. Again, we should count it a thankless matter to be doing kind things one for another and never get a grateful word for it; and because we are receiving good things at God's hand all the week, we go to thank him on a Sunday for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life, but, above all, for his

inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace and the hope of glory. Then our hearts often faint and get weary with the difficulties and troubles of this life: we go to be cheered by hearing of the bright hope of that good time that's coming for God's children, when sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and when God himself shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.

But I have not time to point out half the business which you and I have to attend to in God's house. It is so great and so urgent that, if we minded it as we ought to do, the time for it would never seem long enough, instead of being so tedious we don't know what to do with ourselves. And how do you set about it? You go in, loitering, laughing and talking, as if you had turned into only a neighbour's house,—as if nobody were there but men and women! Did you ever read in your Bibles how one man was struck dead for trifling with things that belonged to the worship of God? If you look in 2 Sam. vi., you will find the story I mean. When the rest of the people are earnestly begging him for what they want,

you neither stand nor kneel, but sit staring about, as if you had no concern in what was going forward; and while the Bible is read, or the sermon preached, you settle yourselves to go to sleep, or do all you can to make fun with the one sitting next you; and when you come home again, what are you the better? Nay, if you reckon up all the times in which you have behaved so in church, say fifty-two every year, and we count that it is ten years you have been going to church,—since you were old enough to understand,—it makes more than five hundred times that God has set it down in his book that you have been mocking him in his house! Did you ever think of the reckoning he will have with you for this when you go to stand before him?

I do not mean to say that this is the way in which *all* working-boys behave in God's house. I have had the pleasure of seeing some earnestly joining in what was going forward, but so few—so very few—that I believe the greater number who read this will feel what I have said is true of them. And, my dear friends, do not satisfy yourselves that it is enough to *look* steady and serious in

church. It may be enough to satisfy your parents, or your minister, but it will not satisfy God. He says this kind of worship is vain, —and does no good. Look in Matt. xv. 8, where he says, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." I will try to make it plainer. Suppose you went into your neighbour's next door with a covered basket in your hand, and said, "I have brought you the half-bushel of potatoes you wished for," but, when he came to take the basket and look in it, it was empty; you had only been tricking him all the time: would he not have a right to be angry? And when you come to God, saying that you bring him a repentant heart for all you have done wrong, a thankful heart for all the good things he has given you, and he comes to look in your heart, and finds no sorrow for sin, no thankfulness for his goodness, but a hard, stony heart, empty of all right feeling, do you wonder if he is angry? You see in the second commandment, which teaches us chiefly about worshipping him, that he is a *jealous* God; and another part of

the Bible tells us that he "is a Spirit, and those that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Now, I can fancy that, if you have had the patience to read this through attentively, you are ready to say, "Well, if it is such a hard matter to do right in church, I think I had better keep away altogether." God forbid that you should say so! I should be grieved even to put such a thought into your head. Suppose you had a wild young horse to manage: no doubt the right thing to have is a good bit and bridle; but if you had carelessly left these behind, I would rather see you with a bit of rope tied to his halter, than with nothing at all with which to hold him in. Our hearts are like wild horses: they want to be rushing into all sorts of evil and mischief: the only thing that really keeps them from harm, and in the right road, is the fear and love of God; but if you have not that, I would rather see you with any little check upon bad wasy than quite without; and such a check I think what you call "keeping to your church" will be. It is a faint effort to do right, which God has often rewarded a

thousandfold, by making some stray word in the service or the sermon sink into the heart of a careless sinner and prove the means of salvation to his soul. But why should you wish to come away with one drop in your empty can, when you might have had it filled and flowing over with blessings? Why should you wish to go on spending the hours in church in the wrong way, in the hope that some time or other the mere fact of your coming may turn out to have been of use, when, if you would only seek God's help to come in the *right* way,—really giving your mind to what you are about,—it would be to you a very storehouse of good things?

"A Sabbath well spent
Brings a week of content
And health for the toils of the morrow;
But a Sabbath profaned,
Whate'er may be gain'd,
Is a certain forerunner of sorrow."

God will visit the sins of false worshippers, not on their own heads only, but on those of their children unto the third and fourth generation; and he will show mercy unto thousands of generations—as it might be rendered—of them that love him and

keep his commandments. I will finish this with a short prayer, which I would beg you to learn by heart, and to kneel down and *pray* (not say it only, but pray it) next Sunday when you go into church:—

"O God, give me thy Holy Spirit in thy house this day, that I may worship thee in spirit and in truth, for Jesus' sake. Amen."

CHAPTER XVI.

BAD WORDS.

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

I HAVE a question to ask you, and I think I can guess your answer before you speak it. Is it right or wrong to swear? You know that it is *wrong:* you have known that a long time,—ever since you were old enough to begin to go to school,—and yet you do it. I grieve to say that, as far as my knowledge of boys goes, (especially in cities,) I believe there are scarcely five out of twenty who are not in the habit of swearing. But, though I know and feel how wrong it is, I do not lay all the blame of it on your shoulders. You heard those words from those about you when you were too little to know what they meant; and you soon began to say them, just because the younger ones always like to talk like those who are bigger;

and you have got into the way of it more and more, till sometimes you hardly know whether you are doing it or not. Now you are growing up to man's size; and yet, perhaps, from that time to this you have never given ten minutes' thought to the matter, just to consider whether you are the better or the worse for something which you are always doing. It is not altogether that you are ignorant about it. However freely you may use bad words in the street, you know that you would not like to have your minister step in and hear you doing so: something in your heart would make you stop till he was out of hearing. I know by this that you have some sort of feeling it is wrong; and if a thing is wrong, it does you harm; and if it does you harm, do you not think it would be at least good sense for you to consider whether you can get rid of it or not? Read on patiently for a few minutes, while I try to make the matter a little plainer to you.

Why is it wrong to take God's name in vain? The simplest answer is, God has told us not to do so in the third commandment. *Why* he forbids it, is plain enough. A

name *stands for* a person; that is, it *represents* a person, like a picture. In business, everybody agrees to take the name as that which represents a person. Maybe you have been sent to the shop sometimes on an errand for your employer; you get things which come to many dollars' worth *in his name:* that is, the shopman lets you have them because you say, "Mr. —— orders so-and-so;" his name, which he bids you use, is as good as his coming to buy the things himself. If you were to trifle with his name and order things which he never sent for, you would be guilty of a great crime: you know it, and have been too wise ever to run your head into such a thorn-bush.

Now, I put it to your own good sense,—you would count that man a fool who got into trouble by lightly trifling with his employer's name: what must those be who, day after day and year after year, trifle with God's name? If he would be angry and punish those who did him this mischief, do you think the great God is taking no notice of the times without number in which you have trifled with his great and holy name? He does not, indeed, make a reckoning with

you at once; you do not feel now as if you were any the worse for the bad language which, perhaps, you have been daily using; but, remember, God's time of reckoning is yet to come. The curses which you have called down upon yourself and others are every one written in his book; and, if now they seem to have passed harmlessly by, they will bring down hereafter a fearful weight of woe, unless God gives you grace to make your peace with him through Jesus Christ.

I do not want to alarm you without good reason. If you doubt what I say, I would beg you just to find out what the Bible says about swearers and swearing. In Zech. v. 3, it says, "Every one that sweareth shall be cut off;" in Lev. xxiv. 15, it says, "Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin." Have you ever fairly looked this prospect in the face? If you will not give up bad words, are you able to bear your sin? I will tell you from the Bible what it will be to bear in this world, and what in the next. In this world, God says of him that loves cursing, "Curses shall come unto him: he delighteth not in blessing, and it shall be far from

him. As he clothed himself with cursing, like as with his garment, so it shall come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones. It shall be as the garment which covereth him, and for the girdle wherewith he is girded continually." (See Psalm cix. 17, &c.) That is, there is no good, no comfort, no blessing, for a swearer, wherever he goes. The curses that he has loved to scatter abroad return to his own bosom; he cannot get rid of them; they are *in his bones;* he must carry them about with him at all times. When he rises in the morning, when he goes out to his work, when he comes back to his home, evil is hanging over him; like a blight upon the plants, all good and joyful things wither where it falls. Oh, my dear young readers, some of you have known much trouble; some of you are inclined to look at others, and say, "I don't know how it is they get on, but nothing seems to go well with me." Be honest with yourselves: if you are swearers, have I not shown you a cause?

And what will a swearer have to bear in the next world? Turn to the commandment with which we began:—"The Lord

will not hold him guiltless." You have seen and heard of a court of justice; you know what it is when the prisoner stands before the judge, and his case has been tried, and his heart throbs almost to bursting while he waits for the sentence; and perhaps you have heard his bitter cry of anguish when "*guilty*" is the verdict given. And if "*guilty*" is a fearful word in an earthly court, what will it be when the wicked stand at the last day before the King of kings, when the books are opened, and the record of those words read out by which (as God has warned us beforehand) those who perish are to be condemned! (See Matt. xii. 37.) Have you reckoned what will follow for those who are among the *guilty* then? They have been cursing themselves all their lives, but they never stopped to think how the curse of God would follow, bidding them depart to the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

I think I hear you say, "Well, really, I know the thing has never done me any good, and I should like to get rid of it; but it is of no use trying. I have got into such a way of saying bad words, that they often

slip out without my thinking what I am saying." I know that it is much easier said than done; I know that, if you do master it, it will cost you a hard struggle at first; but, thank God! many and many a one who was once a swearer has mastered it before you, and is now blessed forever in the kingdom of heaven. What man *has done* with God's help, man *can do* with God's help. Let me give you a few words of advice as to how you may set about it. Begin by praying in good earnest, before you go off to your duty in the morning, "O Lord, keep me from swearing this day." When somebody has vexed you, and you feel the words on the tip of your tongue, just whisper in your heart, "Lord, help me not to do this." If you have done it unawares, and anybody heard you, say to them frankly, "I am sorry I swore just now: I did not mean it." This has been found a great help against doing it again. When you go to bed at night, just think over in your mind, and count up how many bad words you have said in the day; and then determine, with God's help, that it shall not be so often to-morrow. Once more: if you hear anybody else swearing,

tell them kindly, and yet boldly, that they ought not to do it, and show them what harm they will bring on themselves if they go on with it.

In the hope of encouraging you, and, at the same time, fixing it in your mind, I will conclude by telling you a strange but a true story of the way in which a good minister, of the name of Peter Roe, cured a gentleman whom he met, of the habit of using bad words. This gentleman was a captain. He sat at dinner with Peter Roe and many others, and when the company got merry together the captain said he would tell them a good story. So he did; and his friends all laughed very much; but Peter Roe felt sick at heart while he heard it, for almost every sentence the captain brought in oaths and curses. Peter Roe turned over in his mind how he could best make him see his sin and folly, and a few minutes after he said *he* too had a good story to tell, if they were willing to hear it. They all said they should be very glad; and he told them a capital story, which amused them greatly, but with almost every word he kept putting in "Bottles and tongs!" "Bottles and tongs!" and you

may fancy how strange it sounded. The captain thought it so strange, that when it was over, and the company had had their laugh out, he turned to Peter and said, "Excuse me, sir, but I am curious to know the reason of your bringing in such a remarkable expression in your story:—'Bottles and tongs!' What could be the meaning or use of it? It had nothing to do with the story." "And allow me to ask, sir," replied Peter Roe, fixing his eyes on the captain as he spoke, "what could be the meaning or use of the oaths and curses with which you interlarded the story with which you favoured us? Mine was a harmless, though a silly, expression: by your oaths and curses you run the risk of ruining yourself body and soul." The captain was struck dumb by the reproof, and was never heard to swear again. Will you sometimes remember "bottles and tongs" when you are tempted to mix up bad words with what you say?

CHAPTER XVII.

SUNDAY BUSINESS.

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."

Am I not right if I say that there is hardly a day of your life in which you do not know what it is to be tired? And some days you get so very tired by the time night comes that you are almost ready to drop. God knows all about this. He knew long ago that the poor man would have to work hard; and, because he thought and cared about it, he set apart one day in seven to be a day of rest.

Sabbath means rest. Other weekdays are

working-days, but Sabbath-days are resting-days. There is something pleasant in the very sound of it to those who are weary; and it will be pleasanter still if you take it as a proof that God loves you. He cares whether you are tired or rested. He does not forget your hard life; and, because he will not have you overdone, he has ruled that, one day in seven, neither young nor old, master nor servant, man nor beast, shall do any manner of work. But this is not all that he has commanded about the seventh day. If it were, we could not do better than lie in bed half Sunday and eat and drink the remainder; that is, make just the same kind of day of it that the horses do. They are working hard at ploughing, or hauling, or something of that sort, all the week; and on Sundays they stand in the stables, or lie down in the fields, grazing or sleeping as they please. But you know—your own heart tells you—you ought to be above this; you have something better to think of and to care for.

The commandment tells us what we ought to be doing. "Remember the resting-day," God says, "to keep it holy." Now, I

am not afraid that you will forget that the day after Saturday is Sunday; but we have not only to remember what the day is, but *what it is for*, and to see that we spend it on this and nothing else. For instance, if your employer were to say to you, "Remember the market-day, because I want you to carry some grain to the town for me on that day," you would not satisfy him, or consider that you had fulfilled your orders, because you recollected when you got up that it *was* market-day and yet left the grain at home all the while. It would be nothing, unless the business for which he bade you remember the day was done. It is the same when God bids us remember the resting-day. "Remember it," he says, "to keep it holy." Holy things are the affairs of the soul. God bids us remember that the Sabbath-days are *days for our souls*, in which we are to think of them, look after them, busy ourselves with their concerns. You know nothing prospers without being looked after. A watch would not go unless it was wound up; we should get no fruit or flowers from our gardens unless we were willing to take the trouble of planting, weeding and wa-

tering them; and our souls will perish unless we have some time for attending to them.

I can fancy that this puzzles you. You can understand in a moment what has to be done for your body,—to feed it and clothe it and keep it from cold and harm; but when you come to think of your soul you hardly understand *what* there is to be done for it. I will try and explain it to you. It is all *thinking*-work: it must be done in your head, and not by your hands; but it is none the less important, and certainly none the less difficult, for this. Nay, I will not deceive you by letting you think that there is any chance of your doing this work unless God helps you; but our comfort is that God never refuses to give the help of his Holy Spirit to those who seek it. And, before we go further, let me add that thinking-work takes time, as well as work in the fields. Unless you fix a time in which to attend to it, it will surely be neglected, just as other duties would be neglected unless you set apart a time in which to see after them. On other days you have some excuse about this, because I know you are busy

from morning to night; but on Sundays there is hardly a working-boy who might not get at least half an hour's quiet for thinking, if he tried. Go to be alone somewhere: if you can't be quiet in your room, perhaps you could go out in the fields somewhere where you are not likely to be interrupted. I know this sounds very strange to lads of your age; but, if you ask others who have had more experience in thinking-work than you have, they will tell you that it is work for which you must be quiet,—one which is done far best when you are alone.

Suppose, then, that you have gone somewhere to be quiet by yourself. What next? Let me beg of you to begin by lifting up some such simple prayer as this to God:—"O God! I want to attend to my soul; I pray thee, help me, and bless me in doing it, for Jesus Christ's sake." Then try to turn over in your mind this one question:—Is my soul saved yet? Have I got a new heart? Are my sins washed away? Have I begun to serve God yet? *Think* over it. This is what I mean by thinking-work; because it is very hard to keep our minds to such a question as this until we have found an an-

swer. They go off to a dozen other things, and perhaps, when the time we meant to give to our souls is just over, we find we have been considering all the time how we can best get the new clothes we want, or how our next piece of work is to be done. Do not be disheartened if you find it so. The devil will be putting worldly things into our heads whenever we most want to be rid of them; and our own hearts are naturally full of them too. But keep this clear to your own mind:—"My soul will perish unless I attend to it. I cannot attend to it unless I have a time for it, and Sunday was given me on purpose that I might have time for my soul: therefore I am resolved that nothing shall hinder me from looking after its state and seeing whether I am right in the main things."

Surely you do not want me to prove to you that it belongs to every man of common sense to do so. He knows that, in a few years' time at the longest, he is going out of this world,—either upwards or downwards, either to be more happy and joyful and better off than he ever has been before, or to be more miserable, more unspeakably

wretched, than any one can think. Can he have his senses in his head if he never even takes the trouble to ask himself which way he is going? If he never even gives a little time to turning it over in his mind, whether he is sowing the right kind of seed and likely to reap the right kind of harvest?

If you find the answer to your question must be "*No*," the next thing is, if the matter has not been done, set about it at once. Oh, let me affectionately plead with you, as one to whom the welfare of your souls is very dear, when your own heart tells you you are not saved yet, go at once to the Lord Jesus, and cry to him, "Lord, save me: I perish." Those that so come to him he has promised he will in no wise cast out. For this very purpose he came down from heaven and shed his blood for us, that we might not perish, but have everlasting life. Our hearts and lives are full of sin; he tells us that his blood shall cleanse them from all sin: we are weak as a new-born child to do what is right; by his Spirit he promises to make us strong enough to overcome the world, the flesh and the devil. We cannot be at a loss for any one thing which

we need for our souls, for in him we have *all* things, and abound.

And if any lad should read this who can honestly say that he thinks he has begun to be a real Christian, oh! how much thinking-work *he* will find to be done when he gets alone on a Sunday! When he looks over what he has been doing in the week, how many weeds he will find to be pulled up in his heart! What a lack of the beautiful fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, which he cannot produce of himself, but must beg God to implant in him! With God's blessing, this quiet time will serve to put him all to rights and give him a lift onwards for all the rest of the week.

Your Sunday-school duties will take two or three hours of your time. If you properly regard the benefits you may derive from the proper observance of these duties, I am sure you will continue to attend such a school until you are able to teach others. The friendship of a kind Christian man, the use of a good library, and the association with the wise and good, make a good Sunday-school a great blessing to working-boys.

I have lingered so long over *the* great

work of the seventh day—each one's business with their own soul—that I have not time to say much about going to church, and the best way of laying out the other parts of Sunday if it does not tempt you away from church. It is meant to be a resting-day; and God, who knows all our feelings, knows that it would not be rest to lads of your age to be tied to your books, or Sunday-school forms, or church, all day. If you only remember the short, simple rule he has given us,—"To keep the Sabbath-day *holy*,"—that is, as far as possible to make the good of your own soul and the souls of others the main business of the day,—it will remind you that all talking over weekday business, all noisy romping and games, all keeping company with the ungodly, are forbidden; and you will find, as many others have done before you, that the more you turn to better things the more delight you take in them. I have said so much before about how to spend the time in church, that I need not go over it again. I would only remind you that it is time for attending to the most important of all business,—the business of the next world,—and that

those who so make use of it will find it too short rather than too long. And when the services of the day are over, and the evening draws on, what a pleasant time boys of your age may make of it in your own homes, reading aloud to your parents round the fire!

I will only ask you to follow my advice for *one* Sunday, and then decide for yourselves which way of spending it gives you most joy and comfort in your heart when you go to bed at night.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE OLD PEOPLE.

"Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

HAVE you a good father and mother still living? For your sakes, I heartily hope they may be; and I hope, too, you know the blessing of having them. You would soon find out the difference if they were taken from you. Perhaps you know some lad in the village who has lost his parents or is living away from them; and you need only think over his case to find out how much better you are off by living at home. He has to pay for his lodging, and something over for his washing and the mending of his clothes; and if he should be ill or lame, so as not to be earning weekly wages, what is there before him but running into debt or going to the poorhouse? Besides all the difference it makes in money-matters, who can tell all the comfort there is in being at *home* with your own flesh and blood? Is any one willing, like your father and mother,

to look over your faults, to comfort you when you are sorrowful, to soothe you when you are fretted and put out, and to give up their own good for your's? I am afraid you do not half know how rich you are, if God has still spared you the treasure of your parents' love.

And I must not say so without giving you a reason for it. Of course, those who read these pages are strangers to me, and I cannot tell how it may be in each particular case; but I fear that, in a general way, working-boys think much less of their parents than they should. They take it as a matter of course that they should lodge them, wash, mend and cook for them. They give them just enough out of their wages to pay the cost of the food they eat, and put the rest of the money into their own pocket. You may be sure it does not stay *there* long; and where does it go? I fear that, with nineteen lads out of twenty, it is all spent upon themselves. It never seems to come into their heads to do any thing for the parents who have been toiling and denying themselves all their lives for them. Money goes freely towards their own clothes,—too often for treating a

party of friends in the public-house, or for a day's pleasuring; but when did you lay up your spare money to buy your father a warm coat or your mother a Sunday dress; or pinch yourself to supply them with a little fuel or a barrel of flour?

Many a grown man owes his present prosperity and respectability to principles which were taught him by a faithful mother when he was standing at her knee. And can he slight or neglect her when she is old and gray-headed?

I have known many instances of those who were *away*, in a distant country, sending help home,—as if they had learned to value their father and mother by being away from them; but one would think that the constant experience of their kindness and care at home would be sufficient to secure their respect and affection, and, as far as possible, their assistance in the means of living if their parents are poor.

But, though it is easy for me to say this, it is not so easy to make you see it so. The money is your own, you will say, fairly earned by your labour, and you have a right to taste the sweets of it; and, as all the boys you know do the same, where is the harm

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of it? Besides, father and mother want you to look nice; and if you are to get smart clothes you must have the money to buy them with; and, over and above buying the clothes, it would be hard, at your age, if you never had a sixpence in your pocket for a little fun.

Now, if in saying so you speak out the real honest feeling in your heart and truly mean what you say, it is not of much use for me to try to teach you better. I can only turn my good wish to help you into a prayer, and say, "God Almighty, open their blind eyes, that they may see." But allow me to answer that, though these words may be on your tongues, I do not think the thoughts are really in your hearts. I do not believe that you are so lost to all good feeling as this. Of all the men, women and children I have had to do with, I know of none who take a more hearty pleasure in doing a kindness—in making others happy—than manly, intelligent boys of your age. But how is it that these good feelings never seem to turn to those nearest to you?

One reason is, simple want of thought. You have never really turned over in your mind what you owe to your parents and

what your duty is towards them. Their kindness to you has been so steady and constant—like the rising of the sun every morning—that you really have left off taking any notice of it. You would wonder, indeed, and reckon it very hard, if any thing stopped or changed it; but it never comes into your head to think what great things they have done for you, and that they have just as much right to look for help and comfort and kindness from you as you have from them. Is it fair, or in reason, that it should be all on one side? Your heart says, No; the Bible says, No. It seems to me so plain that it is not worth stopping to dispute about it.

Another thing is, you know what you get by laying out your money on yourself; there is a certain sort of pleasure in it, and of what there is you have tasted the sweetness; but you do *not* know—for you never proved it—the inexpressible joy of doing all that lies in your power for your parents. You never tasted the sweetness of hearing your mother say, with tears, that she blessed God for giving her such a son; you do not know what it is to see her face light up with thankful love when you step inside the

threshold and she catches sight of her greatest earthly comfort. It frets you to hear her complain of the cold, and that she cannot have fire enough to keep off her rheumatism, now fuel is so dear; but you never tried how easily you might turn her murmurs into thankfulness and comfort, if you went without your indulgences for a few times and gave her the money to get in an extra supply of fuel. You could feel vexed sometimes to see how patched and old her best dress looks; but did you ever try the pleasure of putting off buying for yourself the hat or handkerchief you wished for, that you might get her a new dress with the money?

One other point I would mention. Did you never think, when you went into the almshouse and saw the number of old people there, what a grievous thing it is that they should be driven out of their homes, and shut up in a place which to their feelings is worse than a prison, because their children are not willing to have the cost and trouble of keeping them? Never let your parents come to this. For how many years had they the cost and trouble of keeping you, doing every thing for you, getting no-

thing back again, giving up a thousand little comforts they might have had for themselves, because you should not go without! And is this all the return they get for it? To be left to the scanty kindness they may pick up from strangers in the helplessness of their old age! I do not wish to be hard upon you, but am I speaking more than the simple truth if I say that this is a wrong state of things from beginning to end? I am sure, when you come to look into it, you will see it so yourselves. What is the rule which God has given us? It is so short that no one need forget it, so plain that none can fail to understand it:—"*Honour thy father and thy mother.*"

Many are used to think this means only *obey* your parents. No doubt it means obey, but it means much more. A horse obeys the whip and bridle, because he fears the smart that will follow resisting; and many a child obeys his father while he is small enough to fear the blows that he will get by doing otherwise. You are growing too old to care much for blows; and, if you did, I should be ashamed to think you had no better reason than this for obeying. At your age, with good common sense on your side, you are

able to enter into something far better. Honour is one of those noble things for which those are the better who feel it as well as those who get it. It is obeying because you love and loving because you respect—look up to—another. It makes a son *consult the wishes* of his father and mother as well as submit to their word. It makes him care as much not to hurt their feelings as not to do them a bodily mischief. It will prevent a rude answer and a harsh voice as well as downright rebellion. And, oh, who can tell the joy and comfort it makes on both sides, when a young man honours, instead of neglecting, his parents, and is trying to do all he can for them instead of getting all he can out of them? Their home is a rest of peace and love and comfort. They may get little variety for their dinner, but you know the wise man tells us, "A dinner of herbs where love is, is better than a stalled ox and hatred therewith." Your heart owns that your parents only wish for your good; and we have explained enough that those who are ruled by their parents' wishes are kept from a hundred hurtful snares through which all suffer who fall into them, and by which many are ruined. Honouring their father and mo-

ther, they themselves will be honoured of others; for nothing wins a man so much respect, both from high and low, as kind and dutiful conduct to his parents; and when he comes to settle in life himself he will get back from his own children the blessing and comfort which he gave to his father and mother.

It is the first commandment with promise. Better than all besides, God's blessing rests on those who obey it. God's rewards will be showered upon them. If time and space allowed, I believe there is scarcely another promise of which we could bring so many beautiful instances of its being fulfilled. Prove it for yourselves. Why is it not a promise for you? Why should you turn away from these offered blessings? I know the reason why you have not had them yet: the roots come before the stalk, the flower before the fruit. The love and fear of God—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—has not yet been planted in your heart by the Holy Spirit; and it is the only root from which dutiful conduct really springs; but, oh, cry unto God in right earnest, to give you this grace by the Holy Spirit, and the flowers of filial love—the fruits of dutiful conduct—shall certainly follow.

CHAPTER XIX.

MURDER.

"Thou shalt do no murder."

MURDER! Why, murder is a shocking thing even to read about. It is well for you if you have never known what it is to be near when the act is taking place. Sometimes it affects those who see it so much that they don't get over it all their lives. The piercing shrieks that startled the neighbours, perhaps in the middle of the night—the blood-stained floor—the reeking weapon—the groans of the dying—and then the pale, cold stillness of death, telling its own story of cruel malice and wrong, as it can never be told in words! You have read of it all in newspapers, if you never knew of one yourself. But the papers can tell us little of what is really the most fearful part of the business,—the dark, dreadful feelings which his sin has left in the mur-

derer's soul. He may perhaps hide what he has done from man: he cannot hide it from God. I know an instance in which the gun or the knife (I forget which) was so artfully made way with, and all signs of blood so successfully cleared up, that no one ever guessed who had done the crime. The police suspected, but could prove nothing; and the guilty man went about his daily business and mixed with the neighbours, as if nothing had happened. Years passed on, and the matter, which had been talked of for miles round, was forgotten at last. But think you *he* could forget? Blood, blood, haunted him wherever he went,—whether alone at his work, or joining in the noisy revels of his companions, or sitting in the house of God. The life-blood of his victim remained like a burning spot before his eyes; that dying shriek was ringing in his ears; his nights were worse than his days; for the dreams which came to him in sleep seemed more horrible than the dark thoughts of his waking hours. He wasted to a skeleton, and at last, worn out with misery, took to his bed. When death stared him in the face, he could hold in his dreadful secret no

longer. He sent for the magistrate, confessed his crime and gave himself up to the hands of justice.

He was not the first murderer who has said of the anguish God has sent into his soul, "My punishment is greater than I can bear," even in this world. And what about the next world? If you look in the end of the Bible, you will find that, after the bright picture of that golden city in heaven which God has prepared for his own people, he says, "*Without* are murderers." Unless their great sin has been washed out by the blood of Jesus, the gates of pearl are closed against them forever: their portion is in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

My dear friends, why do I speak to you of all this? You know of some, perhaps of many, things which you are likely to do wrong; but as to taking away another's life, you would feel angry that anybody should even think you could do such a thing. I know how you feel about it; I have felt just the same; but because I take this commandment, "Thou shalt do no murder," to myself, I wish to put it before you also. Let

me explain myself. Did you ever see a great thistle in the fields, scratching and hurting all who came by, and doing mischief to the plants near? I am sure you have. Did it come there in a day? If you could have watched it from the first, you would have seen it a little, feathery, harmless-looking seed, lightly carried there by the chance winds that blew. It fastened itself by the little hook with which God has provided it at one end, and, once lodged, it grew stouter and stronger every day, till it became the hurtful thing you see it. I scarcely need to tell you what you know so well. If you saw a sprinkling of little thistles in a field, and knew they were going to be left alone, you would make no doubt of their growing up into big ones by-and-by.

Exactly for this same reason, I have a fear both for you and for myself, that unless we are on our guard against it we may be led into the awful crime of taking another's life. Murder does not come in a day. It grows from a little seed,—the seed of *anger* in the heart. Angry, passionate, revengeful thoughts grow into bitter, furious words, and

words into blows; and with how many a one, since the days of Cain, a cruel blow with the fist or a stick has been a fatal blow! An angry man has become a murderer before ever he was aware of the temptation. It was but a little while ago that two lads whom I knew were disputing about some trifling matter. Half in anger, half in carelessness, the younger one hurled the farming-tool in his hand against his companion. It pierced the brain, he fell powerless to the ground, was carried home to linger for a few days insensible, and then he died. If you could have stood with me beside that poor boy's corpse, you would not wonder that I should beg and implore of you to pull up the little seeds of anger in your heart.

We must *look* for the weeds before we can pull them up; and, unless I am much mistaken, you will not have to look far. How did you answer the last time anybody vexed you? When your brother doubled *his* fist at you a few days ago, what did you do with your own? If any one has played you a trick, or dealt unfairly by you, what sort of feelings have been in your mind towards such?

An honest, frank-hearted boy will not wish to hide and deny these things; but I can well imagine him thinking to himself, "And, if I did, what's the harm? Is a lad of my spirit to sit still and let others put upon him as they please? If I stand up for my own rights and give them tit for tat, they won't meddle with me another time." I partly agree with you here: every one has a fair right to defend himself by proper means when another would injure him, either in mind, body, or estate; but is there not a vast difference between turning aside the blow you were going to get yourself, and giving somebody else another?

If you fight, is it not a seed? Is not a quarrelsome temper the very thing which will grow into the plant of murder? Leave it alone, and it will be too strong for you to pull up. Now, while it is little determine, with God's help, to root it out of your heart. There is another thing: did you ever, in all your life, feel the better for quarrelling and fighting? Did you ever go through a quarrel which did you one bit of good? I have asked many lads this question, and never yet found one who could say

yes. And what do you call a man who is always hurting himself,—doing things to make himself unhappy? Solomon tells us, "Anger resteth in the bosom of *fools*." *Resteth*, mind you: it comes into most people's bosoms, but a wise man turns it out as fast as it comes in. He knows too well what it would cause him if he let it alone.

If I have said enough about what anger is and what it does, let me add a word about the best way to get rid of it. One simple rule is, *Fill your sack with wheat, and the devil will not be able to get any chaff in.* Fill your heart with love, and the devil will find you have no room for anger. And where are we to get love? There is a simple answer to this also. If you want water, you must go to the well-spring; if you want love, you must go to the well-spring of love,—God himself. Take your heart to him, like an empty pitcher; beg of him very earnestly to fill it full of love by his Holy Spirit, to make you love him, and love your brothers and companions, and love everybody. A loving heart easily keeps out of quarrels.

Another rule is, *Put no fuel to the flames: but pour water on them.* You know there must

be two to every quarrel. If you are set upon quenching it, never fear but that, with God's help, you will be able to do so. One blow brings another, but "a soft answer turneth away wrath." I know other boys may call you a coward if you do as I advise; but I should like to know which is the brave lad of the two,—the boy who manfully struggles with and conquers his angry passions, or the boy who lets them run away with him where they please, because he dare not fight with himself? My dear friends, fear nothing but sinning against God; seek after no praise as you seek after his, and, with a loving heart and a peaceful life, you will find that in "keeping his commandments there is great reward."

CHAPTER XX.

HOME THIEVING.

"Thou shalt not steal."

It is a common saying, that you may trust a man to take care of himself. It is not always true. Some of us treat ourselves worse than any one else treats us. There is one thing in particular, about which I should like to say a few words, by which working men and working lads do themselves a great deal of harm. It sets their employers against them, and very much spoils their chance of raising themselves and getting on to something better. Shall you be angry if I put it in plain words? It is that there is so little *dependence to be placed on you.* I do not mean that you really intend to cheat and defraud any one; I hope most of you are above that; but I don't think you have a right notion of what *is* just and fair. There is not the high sense of right and wrong—of honour and dis-

honour—among you, which I should like to see. I heard of the owner of a large farm saying, only last week, that there was only one boy he could trust on his premises, and he was a half-silly one, who had not the wit either to make up a lie or take what did not belong to him. If you will let me, I think I can point out two or three instances which will explain what I mean.

Your employer, or his foreman, are going out for the day, and you are set to do a bit of weeding, which you may very well do by night. You start well, so long as they are in sight; but, as soon as they are fairly gone, your hoe comes down slower and slower, and if an acquaintance passes by maybe it stops altogether, while you fall into a chat. If you get to the end of the piece at all, (which I doubt,) you only half do it, for you leave a number of little weeds, which will greatly injure the crop; and, if you reckoned exactly, you have very likely not done above half a day's work: yet you will go and expect to have pay for a whole day, just as if you had done twice as much. If you think this is right and fair and honourable, I can only answer you by another question.

If you went to the baker's and paid down your money for a whole loaf of bread, would you think the baker dealt fairly by you if he took all the money and only gave you half a loaf for it? You may say that time is a different thing from bread; but wherein is the difference as it regards the barter, or the exchanging of either for money? The baker exchanges his loaf for your money; you exchange your time and labour for your employer's money. If the baker puts you off with half a loaf when you give him the full, fair price for a whole one, he cheats you; that is, he steals from you. If you put your employer off with doing half a day's work when he gives you the full, fair credit for a whole one, you cheat him; that is, you steal from him.

This is one of the commonest ways of unfair dealing. I wish I could say it is the only one. You took a handful of sticks when you went home last night. Had you any *right* to them? You picked them, here and there one, out of the hedge as you came along, until you brought in almost a little fagot,—perhaps six or eight cents' worth. You would have cried shame on any one who

stole that sum out of another's pocket; but I see little difference between your theft and their's. You know you only did it because it was dark and you thought no one saw. Ah, boys, wash your hands of these dark doings. If you are doing at night what you would never do in broad daylight, depend upon it, there's something wrong about it.

You had green corn for supper a few days ago. You brought three big ears under your frock, and gave them to your mother, and she boiled them for you. You picked them when you had done work, and carried them away, because you thought they would never be missed. If your employer, or the foreman, had chanced to be there when you came back, would you have pulled them out before they left? This is enough to prove you were ashamed of what you had done.

But, if we want to see how a thing looks on ourselves, the best way is to hang it on a neighbour and consider how it looks on him. If you caught a man pulling down *your* fence to get firewood, or making off with any thing out of *your* garden, what would you think of him? What sort of a

character would you set him down for? But I believe that I need not say more here, to prove to you that you know you have done wrong in these things. What lies at the root of it? Neglect of that one short commandment which you learned almost as soon as you could speak:—"*Thou shalt not steal*;" or, if not neglect of it, a want of understanding it rightly. You take it thus:—"Thou shalt not break into thy neighbour's house in the middle of the night and carry off his goods;" or, "Thou shalt not lie behind the fence when a farmer is coming home from market, to knock him down and take his purse out of his pocket;" and, provided you neither act the part of a highway-robber nor break open a house, you think you are all right.

But you must take this commandment as you do the others. When it says, "Thou shalt not kill," you don't think it means, "Thou shalt not kill twenty men, but thou mayest kill one or two." You take it, as God plainly meant it, "Thou shalt not kill *anybody*." Is it not just the same with the eighth commandment? When it says, "Thou shalt not steal," it means, "Thou shalt

not steal *any thing*,"—not an ear of corn, any more than a purse of gold, if it does not belong to you.

And, while open robbers suffer for their open crimes, you do not suffer the less, secretly, for these more hidden ones. They have injured you, as they have thousand of other people in the country, and kept you back when you little thought of it. I will tell you how. Your employers feel they can never trust you: instead of studying your good and comfort, they feel they must look sharp after their own interests. They think *you* are trying to do as little work, and to get as much money out of them, as possible; and you think they are trying to give you as little money as they can, while they get out of you all the work which can be had. It is a miserable and a dishonourable state of things for both parties; but it is one which, by God's blessing, I believe working men and boys have it very much in their own power to alter. Prove to your employer that you *are* to be trusted; that, whether he is present or absent, you will deal by his property as you would by your own; that you will faithfully fulfil to your utmost the

work for which he employs you, and, however it may be with your fellow-labourers, *you* will soon find a difference. Your employer's confidence, his hearty approbation, and, as time goes on, the solid marks of his esteem for your faithful service, will be an abundant reward in this life. And for the life to come? I would not say (for the Bible does not say it) that honesty will take you to heaven: nothing but the blood of Jesus can do that; but this I know, from God's own word, *that dishonesty* will keep a man out of it:—"Thieves shall not inherit the kingdom of God." See 1 Cor. vi. 10.

Once more: do not let the devil persuade you that, if you can cheat or steal so as not to be found out, you will be none the worse for it. You may not suffer by man's hands; you will by God's; and, remember, there is no hiding things from him. "His eyes are in every place;" "the darkness and the light are alike to him;" "he will bring into judgment every secret thing, whether it be good or evil." I will close by a true story of the punishment he sent upon a successful thief,—a fact which took place only a short while since.

A man connected with railways was suspected of cheating those with whom he dealt; but he was too cunning to let himself be caught. He grew rich on his ill-gotten spoils; but still they could not lay hold of him. Man could not; but God did. The misery which he felt in his own mind was so great that at last he could bear it no longer. One morning he shut himself up in his room, and, soon after, the report of a pistol, going off within, was heard. The door was bolted; but they forced it open, and found him stretched on the floor, quite dead, weltering in blood. He had blown out his own brains with a pistol; and his Bible, which lay open on the table, was spattered with brains and blood. You may think what those felt who looked at it, when they found it was open at the following verse, "As the partridge sitteth on eggs and hatcheth them not, so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool." See Jer. xvii. 11.

CHAPTER XXI.

TELLING LIES.

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour."

It was hay-time, and a young lad was taking an empty wagon back to the field where they were at work. Instead of keeping hold of his horses, as he ought to have done, (for he knew they were rather fractious,) he ran off after a young bird, too young to fly, which he espied in the road. The bird got through a hole in the hedge, and led him a chase to the farther end of the field on the other side; but he could not catch it after all, and when it was fairly gone he bethought himself of his horses. He ran back faster than he had come away; but he was too late: the horses had set off, run the wagon up against a gate-post, broken part of the harness, and one of them had got a bad hurt on his shoulder. Tom was very much frightened, and, doubting which way to go, led them slowly on towards the hay-field.

Who should he see coming out of the gate but his employer? You can fancy the sort of way in which he spoke and looked when he asked Tom what mischief he had been up to. The boy knew very well what he had to expect, and began, "Please, sir, it worn't me: it was Jemmy." Jemmy was a younger boy, who had driven the loaded wagon home.

"Do you mean to say that you came in this state out of the yard?" cried the farmer, pointing angrily, first to the bleeding animal, and then to the broken harness. "Yes, an' that I did," was the answer. "I'll soon satisfy myself about that," said his master; and, pulling Tom after him by the collar, he strode off hastily to the yard. He met little Jemmy at the gate and blamed him for the accident. Jemmy was taken aback, and coloured up at first as if he had been guilty; but he soon began so stoutly to deny the charge that the men on the stack overheard, and one and all, taking his side, declared that he had brought the horses in safe enough, and that they were all right when Tom started to go back again.

The man had suspected this from the first,

and, doubly angry at the trick the boy had tried to play off upon him, he punished him severely. More than that, he stopped a part of his wages every week until he had paid off the cost of the broken harness.

I could have told Tom, as soon as the thing happened, that it was of no use to go and tell a lie about it. The Bible says, "He that speaketh lies shall not escape," (Prov. xix. 5;) and, manage as cunningly as you please, you will find this stands true. Instead of helping you out of one trouble, it only gets you into another. True, you may put on such a smooth face, and make out such a fair story, that you take in everybody else; but never, never, *never* will you deceive the great God. In the dark or in the light, at home or abroad, his eye has been on you, his hand has written down in the book of his remembrance every word that ever came out of your lips,— every single thing you ever did. What for? For this reason, among others:—that liars may not escape. Why are things set down in a book? That one man may reckon up with another about them. This is the solemn reason why every lie has been set down in

God's book of remembrance—that at the last day he may make a reckoning with the liars. He has told us beforehand what it is to be: "All liars," he says, "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." Rev. xxi. 8.

Nor may they wait till then to feel the consequence of what they have done. Even now, to-day, "a sword is upon the liars," (Jer. l. 36.) My dear young friend, if your's is a lying lip, you have felt the prick of this sword before now. You know the uneasy feeling it has made in your heart if you ever told a lie like Tom. It darkens your brow; it makes you ashamed to look anybody in the face; it makes you afraid in the dark, in a thunder-storm,—terribly afraid if an illness comes which puts you in danger of death. No wonder: a liar makes himself hateful alike to God and man. The great God says, "Lying lips are an *abomination* to him," (Prov. xii. 22.) Good men will feel, with David, "I hate and abhor lying," (Ps. cxix. 163.) "He that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight;" and even bad men, who are cheats themselves, will shrink from a liar. They know that he hurts everybody

he comes near; they know that he will hurt them unless they are always watching him; and, if only to save themselves trouble, they feel that the less they have to do with him the better.

I have written the ninth commandment at the beginning of these pages. What has it to do with all this? About as much to do with it as a twig has to do with the tree it grows upon. Pull up the tree, and you will have got rid of all the branches. To bear false witness means to say a thing that is not true, to your neighbour's hurt. Tom told a lie when he said it was not his fault that the horses ran away; he bore false witness when he laid the blame on Jemmy's shoulders. If we never tell lies, we can never break this commandment; and perhaps if we looked into it we should find that half the lies we tell are really to our neighbour's hurt.

In olden times there was a strange story told of a poisonous tree, called the Upas-tree. They said the smell which came from it was so bad that it hurt everybody it came near, and if, by mistake, a poor fellow lay down and slept under its shade, he never

awoke alive. If you or I found even a small sprout of such a tree coming up out of the ground in our gardens, we should think no trouble too great to get rid of it. Lying is a poisonous tree: I beseech of you, grudge no pains to pluck it up; lay hold of it, root and branch; it is a sort of plant that grows again if you leave even a little bit behind; or, rather, I should say, seek by prayer to move God's hand to do this for you, for it is rooted too deeply for you to pull it out by yourself. I should call all the little tricks, and mean, deceitful ways that we often hear of, the twigs and lesser branches of this tree. For instance, a lad knows his father does not like to have him stand at the corners of the street or go to the public-house; he slips out in the evening, and when he comes back, and is asked where he has been, he says, "I've been for a walk." We know he walked to the tavern, but he tells a lie when he gives the answer, for he deceives his father: he makes him think he did one thing, when he did another.

But I need not mention cases: you can think of twenty such that you have played off yourself, or heard others make use of at

your work, or in games together at your own homes. People call them little lies, or white lies, and say they will not hurt. My dear young friends, there is not one word about little or large lies in the Bible. God sets them down as all alike. A small hole in a tub will let out all the water, and one little trick, half a dozen false words, are enough to ruin a man, body and soul. Oh that I could persuade you to wash your hands of them now and forever! Oh that I could persuade you to seek pardon, through the blood of the Lord Jesus, for all the past, and the help of the Holy Spirit to turn over quite a new leaf in this way for the time to come! You know not how these things degrade and disgrace you. They blacken a man's character till they liken it to the devil's; for "he is a liar, and the father of it." As one deeply interested in your welfare, I covet for you the honourable character of men of truth. I covet for you the light heart and open brow of one who has nothing to hide,—the dignity, more real and more noble than that which wealth can give, of being frank and honest and true to your heart's core. And, if you

have been a cheat all your life, it is not too late for you to turn; that is, not too late for God to turn you, for with him nothing is impossible. Take your poor, false, deceitful heart to him, and just put it in his hands, and ask him to make it a clean heart, true and open as the day. He can, and he will if you seek it of him in earnest; he can form in us the heavenly likeness of our blessed Saviour; and his very name was "the Truth."

CHAPTER XXII.

PLAYING FOR MONEY.

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's."

A MAN was hung a little while ago. It is an awful death, let it be how it may; but in this case it seemed worse than usual. William Palmer passed for a gentleman and a good scholar: he was a doctor, and had as good a chance of doing well in this way of getting a living as I suppose any young man could wish for, until he began to play for money. This was the hole in the boat that sank it at last. Like other young gamblers, he lost money instead of winning it: he played again and again, hoping to make it good; but matters grew worse and worse with him instead of better. Then he turned to false bills, and other mean, lying tricks for getting money; but as fast as he gained

it, it was spent upon betting and horse-racing, until the desperate feeling that money was due which he could not pay urged him on to something worse. He knew that money would come in to him when his wife died. He would not blow out her brains with a gun, because that would have been found out; but, as a doctor, he knew all about poisons, and which kind will take away life quietly without its being known. Mrs. Palmer died from taking what he gave her, and the money due at her death was paid down to her husband; but no one guessed then what he had done to come by it. Silently on earth, like the blood of Abel, her blood cried to God for vengeance, but, like his, the cry was loud enough to be heard in heaven.

It is not known how many murders William Palmer committed after that of his wife, to get money for gambling. The last was that of another gambler,—a man named Cook,—who called himself his friend. Cook was far gone in the bad way, but not so far as Palmer: he had some feeling left, for once, when two lads whom he knew were going to the race-course, he was heard to

warn them, "Boys, whatever you do, don't bet: if you do, your happiness is gone." It would have been well for him if he had minded his own words. He little knew his time was so short. Unthinkingly he swallowed the deadly stuff which Palmer mixed for him in a drink: it brought on pain attended with suffering which was terrible to look upon, but, with a heart of iron, Palmer stood by, listening to the dying screams which his own dose had caused, until all was over, and then he seized his gold. He knew not that that very day God's hand was to be laid upon him, to find him out at last. People began to suspect; he was brought to justice; a long, patient trial proved his guilt; he was condemned to die; and he has died, in the prime of his manhood, covered with infamy and shame.

My young friends, though it is true, every word of it, (for it all happened quite lately,) this is a dreadful story. Why should I trouble you with it? I will tell you why. One winter, when the ponds were frozen over, there was one part of a sheet of water in a gentleman's grounds which would not bear safely: he had a mournful proof of it,

for a man sliding there fell in and was drowned. When, several hours after, his body was found, quite dead, the owner of the place was so horror-stricken, he had a board nailed up there, painted with these words, in large letters:—"BEWARE! A MAN LOST HERE." He could not bear the thought that any one else should go the same way; and in reading about William Palmer I have felt as if I could not bear the thought that any one of you should go the same way. Do not turn away in anger, and say I need not be afraid of that: *you* are not going to lay out so much money in bets that you must murder people to make it good. I do not mean, for a moment, to say you would; but I will tell you what makes me fear for you. I know certainly that some of you play for money: you won't deny that; pitch-and-toss is playing for money, and there are fifty other ways of doing it, which little fellows six years old make use of. You may think there is no harm in playing for a few pennies, just, as you say, "to stir up your pluck about the game;" but I tell you what it is like: it is like getting upon a runaway horse: you cannot stop where you

choose. If a man or a boy begins to play for money, or any thing else that he values, he cannot stop where any one in his senses would choose to stop. It runs away with him; it hurries him on, on, on, in spite of warnings, in spite of friends, in spite of the misery that he feels now, and that he fears for the future, ever onwards, and ever downwards, till it lands him in everlasting burnings. I cannot choose but cry out to you, and to all whom I care for, "*Beware! a man lost here.*" One man! Would to God it were only one! Among the souls lost forever, will there not be hundreds and thousands who charge their ruin upon gambling? Listen to one more solemn fact.

You know, from what you have heard and seen yourselves, how often gambling and swearing go together. You will assuredly find out, if you look into it as I have done, that you can have nothing to do with either of the two without suffering for it. For a plain reason: God has forbidden it. Where? In the Bible. The tenth commandment forbids it. It says, "Thou shalt not covet any thing that is thy neighbour's." Now, why do you play? Not because you

wish to give your neighbour the sixpence that lies in your pocket, but because you want to get the sixpence that lies in his.

There are only two fair ways of getting a thing that belongs to another. One is, when it is freely given us; another, when we get it by a bargain, that is, giving the fair value of it in money, or something else instead. In playing for money, there is neither a free gift nor a fair bargain. You covet that which does not fairly belong to you, and you try to get it. Is not this breaking the commandment? Nay, it is breaking two commandments by one sin; for it is a sort of stealing as well as coveting. Oh, if you have any care, any feeling, about your own well-doing in this life, about the saving of your soul in the life to come, listen to God's own words of warning:—"Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." You cannot give it up in your own strength; but beg of God the Holy Spirit—beg of him with your whole heart—that he would make you strong to resist temptation, to give up forever these evil prac-

tices, if you have indeed begun them, and to choose instead that better portion which shall never be taken away from you.

There is a right coveting. The Bible itself tells us to "covet earnestly the best gifts." What gifts? A crown of glory, a golden harp, a home in that shining city where the gates are of pearl and the streets are paved with gold. And how are they to be had? They are to be had by asking for them; for the Lord Jesus bought them for us at the price of his own blood, and now he offers them to us without money and without price.

People have said to me, "This is a hard commandment: it is a hard thing for a poor man to help even wishing for the money and the other things he has not got." My dear young friends, there is one simple way of curing wishing; and that is by *getting*. Get the great riches, the everlasting treasure, which is offered now to you, and your heart will be satisfied. The eager, restless wish to have what you cannot get will be quieted; that blessed feeling of *being contented* will come over your mind. God's Spirit will put it there; he will give you

wisdom to make the most of the little money you have, and you will find that, with God's blessing on your purse, it will go far enough to get all you really need. If you have been used to let your money go in gambling, I don't wonder at your coming short. You know there is an old saying, "A man can't eat his cake and have it too." If you begin from this time, and save all the money you have laid out till now in betting and drink and smoking, I believe you will find not a few dollars in your box at a year's end,—to say nothing of all the peace and comfort you would get during the year from keeping out of mischief. I must add a hearty prayer that God, for his dear Son's sake, may put the wish to do so into your mind, and give you grace to carry it out in your life.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ASKING AND GETTING.

I HAVE heard of a lad who was very well off. His father was a rich man; he had plenty of money, and he loved this boy with all his heart. When he came from school to live at home, his father said to him, "John, I don't much like boys taking money about in their own pockets, but you see my purse here;" and he took out a purse full of gold as he spoke: "it is at your service. Come to me for any thing you want: you have only to ask, and you shall have."

"A lucky fellow, to-be-sure," I think I hear you say: "I only wish *I* had such a chance." This is the very thing I want to prove to you,—that you *have* something of the same kind of chance, and have had it all your life, without knowing it. I know certainly that it has been said to *you*, "Ask, and it shall be given you;" and I believe that all your life you have been going with-

out things which you might have had, just because you would not ask. Are you ready to say, "I never had a friend in my life able and willing to make me such a promise?" My dear friends, *God* says it to you,—the great God, who has all the gold and silver in the world to give away,—the great God, who loves you better than ever earthly father loved a child: he says to you in so many words:—"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find." See Luke xi. 9.

Now, I know what you are thinking:—"Prayer: oh, is that all? Why, I have said my prayers night and morning ever since I can remember, and it has never made any difference. I never was any thing the better for it, nor any the worse either, that I know of."

You remind me of two boys playing under some apple-trees. They both *said* they wanted some of the fine yellow apples that were hanging overhead, but if you had seen them you would have found it hard to believe them. One lay stretched on the ground, too lazy to throw at them, and kept wishing they would fall of themselves; the other did throw a stick sometimes, but

he never took the pains to throw it the right way; and you do not want me to tell you that, as he never sent it into the tree, it never brought down any fruit. After a while, some one passing that way asked why they had no apples. "Oh," said the sleepy fellow, "I've been wishing for them a long time, but they don't fall." And, "Oh," said he of the stick, "I've been throwing at them for some while, but I can't get any down."

Was it likely either that the apples should fall of themselves, or that a stick thrown the wrong way should bring them? Neither is it likely that you will get what you wish for from the Lord God in the way in which you have been praying. Here is one boy out of work: he wants somebody to employ him; but, however much he wishes it, he never takes the trouble to turn his wish into a prayer. There is only One in the world who can make others willing to employ him; but that One he will not ask, and therefore he gets nothing. Here is another who says a prayer twice every day: like the boy throwing the stick, he *looks* more as if he was going the right way to

work to get things. But watch him: he makes a wrong throw: no wish goes along with his words, and empty words will never mount up to heaven: they go another way, and nothing good will come of them.

Wishing without asking is not prayer; and asking without wishing is not prayer. Take one of these two by itself, and it will do nothing for you; put the two together, beg of God heartily to give you what you really wish for, and as certainly as the sun is in the sky you will be heard and helped. I am quite sure you have not been used to think this. If you could but see how the case really stands, that our great Father in heaven, to whom all riches belong, says, "Ask, and it shall be given you," there is not one of you but would be praying a hundred times a day. I think you have been under several mistakes about it. Will you go patiently along with me if I try to point them out to you?

One is, you think you may ask for things for your souls, but not for your bodies. I know many do; and, if it is your case, I will ask you just to look and see what the Bible says about it. Look at John xiv. 13, 14,

look at Matthew xxi. 22, and tell me what the words "all things," "any thing," and "whatsoever," mean. Read inthe sixth chapter of Matthew, from the twenty-fifth to the thirty-fourth verse, and tell me whether God takes any notice about your clothes, or about your being hungry. Find out the last chapter of the Epistle by James, the fourteenth verse, and tell me whether or not God wishes us to pray that our sick friends may get better. I cannot write out the verses for you here; but I do beg of you to find them and think for yourselves what they point out.

Let me only beg of you to try it for yourselves. Hide nothing from God; tell him if you come short for food; tell him if you want clothes to keep you warm; tell him if you are wanting work. He thinks so much about you that he has counted the hairs on your head. What mother, even, ever cared enough about her child to do that? After he has told you this, can you think that any thing is too small to bring before him?

But this reminds me of another of your reasons for not praying, in which I think you are half right and half wrong. You

say, "*I* go and ask God to send me work? No! I am too great a sinner!" And you call to mind the number of times you were swearing last week, and may-be the nights on which you were in foolish and hurtful company, and say again to yourself, "No, I couldn't do it." You feel as if every time you had done wrong you had added one brick more, till at last there was a thick wall built up between you and God. I said you were half right in this, and half wrong,—right, because if a man is in the very act of sinning, and intends to go on in wrong ways, it is of no use for him to pray. You feel it is so, and you are quite right. But if you are really wishing now to turn over a new leaf, and think that because you *have done so badly in times past* it is of no use for you to pray, you are mistaken. Sins that we are wishing and trying to put away will not hinder our being heard. If I tell you a little more about John's family, I think I can make it plainer.

You remember how much John's father thought of him. It was the less wonder, because his only brother had turned out very badly. He had disobeyed his father in all

sorts of ways, ran away from home, and even on one occasion set fire to his hay-stacks. For some years he led this wild, wicked life, till at last he was heartily sick of it. He saw how well his brother John was off, and what a happy life he led; and one day, happening to meet him in the lane, he told him that he began to see differently now, and all he wished was to come back home and show his father what a good son he would be. "But," said he, "do you know I dare not come to him myself, John? Burning the hay-stacks, and going on as I have done, I really feel afraid. I wish you would speak a word for me; I think my father might listen to you." John promised to do his best; and do you think he had a hard task to persuade his tender, affectionate father to receive his brother, now he was really sorry and wanting to go on better? The father sent John to bring him in all haste: he threw his arms round his neck, and they wept together for joy. Tom never wanted for any thing again. As soon as his father had proved him a little, to see that he was really in earnest, he let him come to him

for any thing he wished to have, the same as John.

You feel there was reason in this. If Tom had come to his father for things while he was in the midst of his bad ways, of course he would have got nothing; but when he was wishing to give them up the case was quite altered. And, my dear young friends, do you feel it was a good thing for him to have a brother to speak a word for him? That is what you and I have too. The Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son who never turned against his Father,—he calls himself our elder brother: he will speak for us; he has promised to do so; and, what is more, God our Father has promised that he will deny us nothing that we ask in the name of Jesus. You may find this in the texts I have already given you, John xiv. 13, 14.

Now, I put it to your own good sense, when was Tom the best off? When he was all against his father, leading a wild life under the hedges, or after he was reconciled to him, when he could look upon all his father possessed as his own? I know you have often been badly off: my heart has

sometimes ached to think of it; but I doubt if it is not a great part of it your own fault. When I think of God's promises—when I hear what others have had in answer to prayer—I firmly believe you might be well off too, if you would only go the right way to work about it. Seek first to be reconciled with your heavenly Father, through the Lord Jesus, our Brother; then go to him for any thing and every thing you want; look upon all his riches as your own, and don't be afraid to tell him even the smallest wishes that come into your heart. Prayer will never be empty words to you then; I should never hear you say that you were neither the better nor the worse for using it; but it will be to you a golden key, which unlocks a whole treasure-house of good things both for this world and the next.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

"Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

THERE was a young fellow who had a nice little bit of garden-ground given him by his employer; and he told the lad, when he took it, that he should come at the year's end and see what use he had made of it. When the twelve months were up, the farmer was as good as his word; for he came to the place and looked at it. And right vexed he was at the sight: the young man had never even raised a potato there! You could tell with half a look that he had never spent an hour's work upon it: it was

covered with weeds and thistles a yard high. It would have been far better both for master and man if the lad had never had it; for the farmer's ground was wasted, and the young man had done his own character a hurt which he did not get over for years.

He tried to make excuses. He said he was no farmer, and did not know how to manage the ground; but he knew very well that there were a dozen men in the place who could have told him, if he would have asked them. Then he said he was so busy, he could find no time; but he knew very well, and the man knew, that there were few days in which he had not found time to waste, which, if he had given to the ground, would have repaid him a hundred-fold. Nothing, in its way, will do us better service than land; but we must *know how to make use of it*, and we must give *time* and *thought* and *labour* to it.

People who need things the most are sometimes the slowest in making use of the few things which do belong to them.

Let me make myself a little plainer. The great God, who knows all about us, and saw, before we were born, how many

things we should want for our comfort, of one kind or another, wrote down for us exactly the way in which we were to ask for different things which would be for our good. He told us to make this prayer to him, and promised that when we did we should get what we asked for. (Read the sixth chapter of Matthew.) And what use have you made of the fair prospects of help thus held out to you? Give me an honest answer, and say *if you have ever got any thing* in all your life from using the Lord's Prayer. I know you may have *said* it; I dare say you have, hundreds of times; but it is not long since I tried to show you that saying is not praying. Prayer never goes up to heaven without bringing something good down from heaven to the soul that utters it: therefore, if you say, and say truly, that you never got any thing from using this prayer, I am sure you have never prayed it. And what follows? You have been hurting yourself all your life, for you have cheated yourself out of all the good things you might have had through it; and you run the risk of getting into a worse trouble afterwards, for He who gave

it to you will reckon with you at the last day for the way in which you have despised and neglected his good gift.

It may be some help to you if we go through it together, slowly, and try to make out exactly what it does mean.

You know how it begins:—"Our Father, which art in heaven." That is, God tells us to call him *Father*. If you only saw that the great God means what he says by this, you would feel it was worth more than a purse of gold to you. Gold would be used up in time; but the good things which God is willing to give to those who look to him as their Father can never come to an end. Remember, *he never said what he did not mean.* When he told you to call him Father, he fully meant to do a father's part by you; and he will still, if you will only take him at his word. You have never made use yet of this blessed hope of getting all your wants supplied; but, as your friend, I beseech you, don't neglect it one day more. Call the great God, in good earnest, Father. Remember that he is willing to forgive all you have done against him, for Jesus' sake; ask him to help you

to act like a real son to him, and then there is nothing you want which you need go without, because there is nothing which he is not able and willing to give you.

"Hallowed be thy name." Hallowed means kept holy; as if we said, "Let me —let everybody—keep thy name holy." This reminds us of the third commandment. It is really praying that you may not use bad words yourself, and that nobody else may use them. Oh, how many a hurt you would have saved yourself, and those around you, if you had really put up this prayer every day! If you saw a stone thrown at you, you would gladly put up any thing that was at hand to save yourself from it; but a stone that cut or bruised you would not do you half the hurt which the bad words do from which you are constantly in danger. Put this prayer between yourself and them: a hearty cry, "Let me hallow thy name to-day," will keep you from them. Put it up for others too: you don't know how much misery you may stop by it.

"Thy kingdom come: thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." I have put

these two together, because they speak of the same matter. I doubt whether you all know what a kingdom means; but you can guess from the first half of the word that it has something to do with a king or ruler. Your employer's farm might be called his kingdom. He rules over all that is done there. You know, by what you have seen, that a good farmer makes a good farm-yard, and a good ruler makes a happy kingdom.

We ask here that God will come and be our ruler in this world, because we know how happy it would make us. This world, and the people in it, are not under God's rule now: we know that; because he is not obeyed; his will is not done. He knows exactly all that goes on, but he seems to take no notice. Wicked men seem to get off without being punished. God's best servants are often in trouble. But who is ruling now? Satan. This world is the devil's kingdom now. He is called its god, its prince, its ruler, in the Bible. (See John xiv. 30; 2 Cor. iv. 4; Eph. vi. 12.) We have only to look around and see all the sin and all the sorrow going on about us, to be sure we are partly under his power: his

will is done, not God's. He hates us, and day by day he is doing all that in him lies to make us miserable. You have not thought much about it, but you have seen enough to make you feel that we are in a bad state now,—enough, perhaps, to make you wish for a better. You will help on the coming of a better state every time you put up this prayer in good earnest; for this world is not always to be Satan's kingdom, his will is not always to be done here. The Lord Jesus Christ is coming from heaven to cast down the wicked prince and take the rule into his own hand. Oh, what different times there will be then! Our heavenly King will deliver us from all sin, all sorrow. There shall be no more curse on this ground, no more pain, no more tears. We shall all do his will then, as the angels do in heaven, and we shall be as happy as they are now. Who would not beg and pray for the coming of this kingdom? Only mind one thing, that if you join in prayer for it you make sure of getting a part in it. If you are not now serving the Lord Jesus, it is folly for you to pray for the coming of

his kingdom. It will be the ruin of all those who are not walking in his ways.

"Give us this day our daily bread." I need not stop to tell you what this means. Only let me say, that if you are one of those who neglect the Lord's Prayer, there is reason enough why you are short of food. You might have had plenty, if you had asked God for it. I know certainly that you would *not* have wanted if you had really prayed this prayer; and I believe God will not let you want if you really pray it for the time to come.

"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." These, too, are plain words, if you remember that "trespass" means sin. We need to pray this every day,—just as we need every day to cleanse our hands and face afresh, because they get stained and soiled: so we need every day to get the fresh sins we have done washed away in the blood of Jesus. And, oh, if you have never felt the comfort of forgiven sin, let me beg of you to take these words in your mouth and go at once to seek it of God. You can never tell, till you have tried, all the sweetness, all the joy,

all the peace, that spreads over our hearts when we once know that we have been forgiven for Jesus' sake. And do not be hindered by the feeling, "I can't forgive those that vex me: so I have no right to ask to be forgiven myself." Ask God to help you to forgive others, and then make use of the prayer which he himself has taught us.

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." If all the men that have been hung for murder had heartily prayed this prayer on the morning of the day in which they took another's life, they would have died in their beds instead of on the gallows; for God would have heard, and kept them from this dreadful evil. Whatever you forget, don't neglect this prayer before you go out of a morning. You don't know half the troubles it will keep from you.

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen." How glad we ought to be that God has taught us to put this at the end of all the great things we have been asking! They are indeed great things to be granted to poor sinners like us; but we need not fear: *his* is the kingdom, the power and the

glory. There is nothing that he is not able to do for us, and nothing that he is not willing to do; for if he spared not his own Son, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

And now, for the present, I must bid you good-by; and allow me, in doing so, to add one more word. I could not tell you, if I tried, how earnestly I have longed to see you become different from what you are now. I want to see you far better off in this world,—more faithful, more diligent, more trustworthy in your work; and then I know how much better you would get on with your employers. I want to see you wiser, more careful in managing your own money-matters, more loving, more dutiful in your homes; and then I know how happy you would be with your own families; but, above all, I want to see matters put straight between you and your God, because I know all other good things are bound up in this. I want you to have the Lord Jesus for your own Saviour and friend. I want you to seek every day for the help of the Holy Spirit, to make your hearts and your life clean; then you would be cheered, in all

your daily labour and toil, with the bright and certain hope of heaven. But let me repeat once more, that, under God, your lot lies entirely in your own hands. What you will *be*, and what you will *have*, depends upon your own choice, your own actions: only this I know, that if you ask, it shall be given you; if you seek, you shall find; if you knock at the door of the kingdom of heaven, to you it shall be opened.

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